

**Inspiring Communities** is a nationwide group of communities committed to a new way of doing things. We support local communities to reach their vision and goals by:

- ✓ Promoting the power of working collaboratively
- ✓ Supporting leadership and learning for community-led development
- ✓ Linking people, projects and places
- ✓ Developing and sharing resources, tools and new knowledge
- ✓ Being a catalyst for change in communities of place.

We operate an *Exchange* that links communities with others who are involved in community-led initiatives, and can offer information, advice and support.

This month the newsletter provides a wide range of information for those interested in community-led development. Firstly there is a close look at the origins and activities of the ground-breaking *Great Start* community-led development work in Taita fostered by Barnardos. There is a focus on the development of community parks and gardens as a catalyst for bringing residents together. This is followed by highlights from the Australian Social Innovation Summit, an Auckland housing renewal visit, and Mary-Jane's recent meeting with the Rowntree Foundation in the UK. There is an update on the plans of the Marfell Combined Culture Trust in New Plymouth. Lastly, readers are alerted to the 2009 Philanthropy New Zealand Conference with Mark Cabaj from Canada's Tamarack *Institute for Community Engagement* presenting, the call for submissions on *Building Sustainable Urban Communities*, and some useful websites.

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## **Great Start Taita – a great place for children to grow up**

Moving beyond service provision to allow people to connect around their hopes and dreams is the purpose of the *Great Start* initiative in Taita, Lower Hutt. Barnardos is a large and well-respected service provider that supports children and families throughout New Zealand and is prepared to take risks and to do things a bit differently. In the case of *Great Start* what's most different is that the focus is on community-led development – asking people who live in Taita and have a real interest in the future of the area what they want, and supporting them to make it happen.

Barnardos owns an old house (which was originally a nunnery) in Cooper Street, Taita. Over the years, a number of services have been provided from the house, but none of them seemed to 'stick'. So instead of simply piloting yet another service the decision was made to ask Taita residents what, if anything, they wanted for themselves and their community.

Over a six month period a Barnardos staff member and a local social work student knocked on the doors of hundreds of Taita homes and took time to talk with people on doorsteps and around kitchen tables. What they heard was fascinating and powerful. ***People in Taita wanted to make connections with each other and to be helped to connect with the services that already existed.*** People weren't asking for specific services or handouts.

While residents clearly wanted some specific things like a park for kids and adults to use, and phone boxes and bus stops that were useable, ***their real interest lay in building a stronger community themselves rather than having others come in and do it for them.*** The other strong message was that if Barnardos was to get involved the organisation had to be prepared to be there for the long haul and not just parachute in and then leave.

A similar message came from conversations with other organisations that worked in the area. Other service providers did not want to compete with each other or with Barnardos. Instead people talked about a strong desire to work together, to support each other and to find different ways of working ***with*** the Taita community, not just delivering services to people or 'clients' who live there.

Barnardos listened to this feedback and decided that the focus of its work in Taita should be connecting people, providing a space for people to 'talk and develop community, and facilitating collaboration.



*Great Start Taita* is a community initiative. It is supported and funded by Barnardos – but it is not owned by Barnardos - and it also has support from the Ministry of Social Development through the Early Years Service Hub initiative. It is a loose, informal collaboration of lots of different community groups, service providers and residents who live and work in the Taita area and who are interested in Taita being a great place to live. *Great Start* has two main aims:

***Connecting people to people*** - building networks of people who know each other, have fun together and can help each other, not only by providing services but as friends, neighbours and colleagues.

***Doing things differently*** - working creatively, building trust, building bridges across traditional barriers, learning new things and doing things together as a whole community rather than as separate organisations, groups, families or individuals.

Supporting parents, young children and families is a strong focus of the work *Great Start* is doing. And *Great Start* is also finding ways to connect across cultures, across sectors, across generations, and with people who can easily become invisible or "too hard to deal with" in the community.

Lots of activities and ideas are being generated by *Great Start* at the house in Cooper Street:

- a small toy library is operating
- a community garden is being built
- there is a warm, inviting – and much used - space for caregivers and children to come and play together, and
- a range of service providers use the house to deliver programmes including mother support groups, ante-natal services, a playgroup, and parenting programmes.

## Taita Park Development

*One of the themes that came out of the door knocking in the early days was the strong desire for a park in Taita. But people weren't talking to each other about it, there was little sense that it was possible and there was no clear idea of how to go about making it happen.*

*Through lots of conversations, and a level of perseverance, Great Start was able to connect the dots and grow the energy for getting things moving. The upshot was that a group of children, together with their parents, were given the opportunity to present their ideas at a Hutt City Council meeting.*

*The children's creativity, vision and openness broke down the formality of the process and led to significant generosity from the Council, both in terms of financial support and, just as importantly, the time, energy and enthusiasm to walk alongside the community to make a park happen – a joint venture was born.*

At the same time 'working groups' of service providers, community groups, the schools and pre-schools, the local council, and residents are meeting together, often for the first time, to take action on things such as:

- creating the Taita park
- growing better connections between early years services and with schools
- building connections with men and fathers
- finding useful and practical ways of learning together.

Focusing on building relationships - not providing services - is a fundamental part of this different way of working. Karen Clifford (the manager at *Great Start*) is adamant that the house is not (and will not become) a community hall or centre. Staff at the house work hard to make sure that people don't just turn up, access a specific service or event, and then leave. Instead staff spend time making sure that people meet each other, find out about other things that are happening in Taita, share their ideas and become part of creating what happens next.



Karen is also keen to stress that it doesn't matter if activities happen in the house or not. While the *Great Start* house provides a wonderful space for all sorts of things to happen *Great Start* is not about the house. It is about facilitating and supporting collaboration and connections across the whole of Taita and supporting existing networks, relationships and organisations to grow and become stronger and new connections to develop and flourish.

Doing things together that people really want, building trust, being committed for the long-haul, learning to give and take, and connecting through fun and play (not just problems) are some of the principles that are guiding what is happening at *Great Start*. The initiative has linked into the *Inspiring Communities Network* as a way of learning more about how to 'practise' community-led development and of finding out more about what other communities are doing, both within New Zealand and overseas. This connection has been exciting and rewarding.

Even after 18 months of operation it is still 'early days' for *Great Start*. What is happening in Taita feels good – and it is still new and tentative. Not arriving with solutions and not providing services is often easier said than done. It is easier to feel successful when you can count the number of people who have attended a programme or touch the resources that you are providing, and *Great Start* can count a whole lot of activities or outputs.

But – more importantly – how do you measure the value of relationships? How do you measure the impact of connections between people from completely different sectors or walks of life? How do you make sure that what you are doing is more than a 'talkfest'? How do you grow real community leadership? How do you ensure that what is being developed is sustainable, simultaneously reflecting and building a community vision and is truly community-led? And how much of this is actually making a tangible difference for people who live in Taita? How does the whole community – people who live, work, care and invest in the community – work together, intentionally, to make Taita a better place for the future?



These are the questions we are grappling with. For some questions we have the beginning of answers. The partnership with the Hutt City Council – and many others – for the park development is one example. This is not just a park being built but a whole new collaboration of actors creating it together... with local Taita children and adults knowing that they identified the issue and created the opportunity.

The willingness and generosity of Barnardos to 'blur' traditional organisational boundaries and to support staff to work in very different ways – along with the 'peer' support being provided by *Inspiring Communities* – are providing a creative safety net for *Great Start* as it grows and evolves.

This different way of working has not yet proved itself. And there are some tough questions to grapple with. But if the laughter, enthusiasm, enormous energy and commitment, totally unexpected connections, new activities, pride in self and in Taita, hope, cups of tea and chatter (an ever present feature around the *Great Start* house kitchen table) are any part of the measures of success, then *Great Start* is definitely on the right track.

***Thalia Wright, Karen Clifford, Jenny Blagdon***

### ***Creating gardens and parks: A community building activity***

As *Great Start* has recognised (above), the development of gardens and parks provides a focus for community building. In particular it offers opportunities for the participation of almost all residents of a community. Young and old can come together for a common - and creative - purpose. Community gardens range from small plots to the complete revegetation of a large area. A good example of this type of complete overhaul is the work undertaken by the Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies (*Ceres*) in Melbourne.

Originally a blue stone quarry and a rubbish tip, a radical transformation occurred after local people were granted long term stewardship of the site by the Local Brunswick Council. In response to emerging social and economic issues, the efforts of countless local residents, from newly arrived migrants, long term unemployed people, young people and volunteers have changed a bleak landscape from this.....



...to this lush community garden.



A permaculture plan for the site guided the early projects, which included revegetation, building, landscaping and community garden construction. Photos and further information available from [www.ceres.org.au](http://www.ceres.org.au).

**Helen Wilson**

## **Social Innovation Summit 2008: Seeking inter-sectoral solutions**

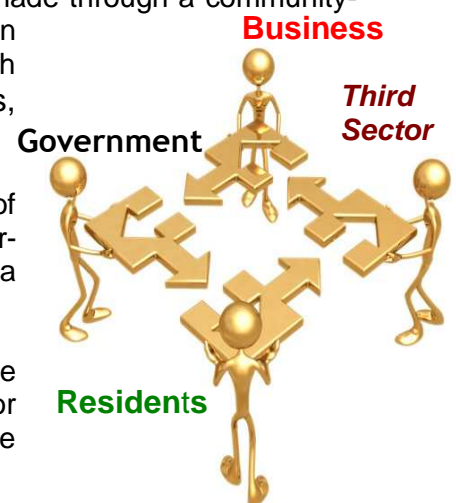
Deep concern about the entrenched nature of deprivation within certain communities prompted the gathering of fifty leaders at the third Social Innovation Summit in Australia recently. Representatives from government, business, and not-for-profit organisations gathered together to find solutions to what one speaker, Tony Vinson, called 'postcodes of disadvantage'. These are disadvantaged communities with inter-linking characteristics which Vinson's Australian study found to have remained largely unchanged over recent decades, in spite of wider social and economic growth.

One of three representatives from New Zealand was John Prendergast, the CEO of the Community Trust of Southland in New Zealand. John outlined in his presentation how, in New Zealand and Canada, a real difference is beginning to be made through a community-led development approach which focuses on place, rather than issues – and where the whole community is involved with connections between government, business, residents, funders and the third sector'.

Stories of successful communities illustrated the benefits of collaborative ventures between business, government and not-for-profit sectors, allied with strong community participation as a critical component of this success.

The Social Innovation Summit was hosted by the Macquarie Group Foundation in partnership with Mission Australia, Centre for Social Impact and Social Ventures Australia. There is more information on the Mission Australia Website:

[www.missionaustralia.com.au](http://www.missionaustralia.com.au)



## Community Hub students hit the road in Auckland

Early community research undertaken as part of the Tatou West Harbour neighbourhood project showed local residents wishing they could access a greater range of social services locally. People also talked about wanting a community drop-in space or facility that was theirs – something that would strengthen the sense of community and belonging in West Harbour too.



**Hub Tourists:** L to R – Cissy Rock, newly employed Community Development broker at Waitakere City Council; Megan Courtney, Massey Matters Project Leader; Angela Pearce, Regional Manager West and North Auckland HNZC; Andrew Wood, Social Infrastructure Planner at WCC; Bev Harris, Massey Community Trust; Jenny Tanner, Community Development Coordinator Tatou West Harbour; Jane Livingston, Massey Community House.

But what should or could a neighbourhood hub in West Harbour look like? What should be in it? How could we get local community involved

in planning and making sure it really is ‘theirs’ too. To help stimulate our thinking, a group of us jumped in a van to go and take a look at three ‘community hubs’ which have been set up to support Housing New Zealand Community Renewal Programmes in Clendon, Northcote and Talbot Park. No point in re-inventing wheels when you can hopefully borrow a few good spokes!!

All three hubs were really different, but generally included some or all of the following: a few meeting spaces, kitchen, an office base for local HNZC tenancy managers and ‘hot desk’ spots for other visiting service providers, a tool library, community garden, a community development worker and a community home ‘handy-man’. In the van on the way back out West, we shared the following thoughts on what we’d seen and learnt:

- *“there’s no one size fits all, each hub has to fit the community need and context for what’s going on around it”*
- *“going from working in the toy library to leading the residents group – that’s what I call building community leadership skills”*
- *“it’s the simple things that matter, you don’t have to do big things to have a huge knock on effect”*
- *“when good things are happening, good people come on board”*
- *“you can’t do community renewal projects without engaging people and their ‘whole’ lives”*
- *“I loved the tool library and toy library and community gardens – things that can bring people of all ages into a community hub.”*

And we also reflected on a few words of wisdom from one of the fantastic community development workers we met:

- ✓ *“do what you say you’re going to do”*
- ✓ *“take others’ ideas and help deliver really visible things”*
- ✓ *“build trust, faith and encourage others to engage with communities you’re working alongside”*
- ✓ *“everyone’s got talent, you just need to find it.”*

**Megan Courtney**

## Community-led development coming to New Plymouth

The Marfell Combined Culture Trust in New Plymouth opened in the 1980s and provides a long-standing basis for developing community leadership in Marfell. The Chairperson, Glen Bennett, says it was not the Trust's intention to be "the be all and end all" but rather to provide an access point for residents in the Marfell area. Using a community development focus, the objective is for Marfell to become a stronger and resilient community. Simon Cayley of the Bishop's Action Foundation, says that new leaders are needed who can focus on the community's regeneration.

There are many local strengths to build on, such as the Marfell celebrations in March this year, but Marfell has been identified as the most deprived area within urban New Plymouth, experiencing higher unemployment, lower average household earnings, and fewer internet connections than the rest of new Plymouth. Government and statutory agencies deliver a range of services in the area and fund a vast number of consultation exercises - sometimes resulting in "consultation fatigue". In spite of this there has been very little progress, development or sustainable change in the last two decades.



One continuing issue identified by the community is the need for greater capacity and cohesiveness to be a driver of its own development. While community leaders do exist, they do not yet hold the mandate of the larger community. This has meant that engagement within Marfell remains top-down, with the community as a key informant rather than as a leader. As a result the Marfell community has identified the need to focus on developing the capacity of the community to come together with strong leadership - and through these leaders to identify a vision for its future.

If a funding application is successful, the community will appoint a community worker who will work for the local community and develop leadership capability. This will enable the community to identify their own needs and strengths, and engage with appropriate agencies and stakeholders to develop responses to them.

A key element of the engagement process will be an asset-based approach. The initiative will work from the perspective that everyone living and working in, or engaged with, the Marfell community has something to offer. Focus groups will be held with sections of the community to ascertain skills, capacities and resources. Themes and issues emerging from these discussions will form the starting point for an action plan.

Over the next three years it is hoped that Marfell will become a strong cohesive community in which the residents have pride. But first there is a need for a unified vision for the future. Strong community leaders will be identified, supported and resourced. Collaborative relationships will be nurtured with government departments, community organisations, the local authority, business and funders. These diverse sectors will be involved in co-ordinated activities and programmes. Systems and processes will be developed to sustain a comprehensive, multi-sector strategy for the increase of social capital in Marfell. Neighbours will know and support each other and residents will have the capacity to resolve the complex issues they face. *Inspiring Communities* is ready to work with and support Marfell.

**Prepared by Simon Cayley of the Bishops Action Foundation and Elaine Chair of the Taranaki Employment Support Foundation**



## Wine Gums, Effective Philanthropy and Strong Neighbourhoods

It wasn't my enjoyment of wine-gums that took me to the Rowntree Foundation, in York, when I was on a recent trip to the UK. It was their reputation as a highly effective and influential researcher, doer and grantmaker that led me to ask CEO Julia Unwin for a discussion.

As one of Britain's wealthiest nineteenth century industrialists, producing wine-gums, cocoa and chocolate, Joseph Rowntree started his philanthropy by building model villages to provide his workforce with healthy, well-equipped houses and other amenities. He also formed a Trust initially to administer the houses. By 1959 the Trust had widened its objectives to cover research, grant-making and development. It became the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 1990.



Today the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has three inter-connected aims:

- **Reducing Poverty:** to examine the root causes of poverty and disadvantage and identify solutions.
- **Empowerment:** to find ways in which people and communities can have control of their own lives.
- **Place:** to contribute to the building and development of strong, cohesive and sustainable communities.

*As New Zealand's Te Radar says – We cannot have Sustainability without Community.*

The connection between the focus of the Rowntree Foundation and *Inspiring Communities* is very clear, although our roles are quite different.

In addition to making grants of £6-7 million annually, the Foundation allocates £3-4 million to research on reducing poverty, empowerment and building strong cohesive communities.

Building and operating accommodation and villages remains important, with the Foundation currently leading a 540 household development in York. The Foundation is aiming to build a genuinely mixed community through good design and involving the existing community, and will bring a carbon-neutral sustainability focus including solar as a major source of electricity and heating.

In terms of place, Julia Unwin and the Foundation are particularly interested in:

- ✓ Asset-based community development – working with the strengths of communities
- ✓ Incorporating the learning from their own housing interests
- ✓ Exploring and understanding the connection between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches, and how to make real connections between policy, regulation and community decision-making processes
- ✓ Deepening understanding and knowledge about community resilience.

The Foundation's research on the social value of public places and their *Neighbourhood Programme* initiative are relevant to New Zealand. Some highlights are on the next page and more information can be found on the Foundations' website [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk).

## "People make places"

### The social value of public spaces in urban regeneration: Rowntree Foundation research key findings

- ✦ Successful public spaces rely on people using them: "People make places, more than places make people".
- ✦ There is clear evidence of the importance of public spaces in successful regeneration policies and for creating sustainable communities.
- ✦ Spaces that successfully attract social activity are often banal in design, or untidy in their activities - such as street markets and allotments. Designers need to be responsive to the use of public spaces, not just aesthetics.
- ✦ Strategies to solve anti-social behaviour by moving it elsewhere are likely to be ineffective and risk worsening local tensions.
- ✦ Public spaces should be inclusive, provide opportunities for exchange and give users the ability to shape what happens there.
- ✦ It is important that local people are consulted about what they want from the public spaces in their communities if these places are to deliver their full promise.

The Rowntree Foundation has also operated a *Neighbourhood Programme* testing out a 'light touch' approach to supporting 20 very different organisations working in a range of neighbourhoods. The programme evaluation found that:

- Sustainable neighbourhood-based organisations are vital to effective community engagement.
- A low level of continuous 'light touch' support can make a real difference to neighbourhood groups. The 'light touch' support provided through the Rowntree Foundation programme illustrates the value of giving neighbourhood organisations access to:



- ✓ **a facilitator:** someone who is 'on their side' and to whom they can turn for ideas, support and when things go wrong
- ✓ **credit:** small amounts of un-tagged money can make a big difference, particularly to smaller community groups and those just starting out
- ✓ **networking opportunities:** there is a confidence and status that comes from finding out your experience is shared by others
- ✓ **help with action planning:** even the smallest of community groups benefited from support to review local needs and opportunities, map out their future and reflect on past achievements and difficulties
- ✓ **a broker who can mediate** with other organisations and agencies if necessary and unblock and help to build relationships with power-holders.

More intensive community development support is needed where there is a long history of disadvantage, where there is a fragmented community and where there is a major change at community level, for example, resulting from urban regeneration programmes. It will also be needed where there are pockets of disadvantage in more affluent areas, which are often hidden from view, and in areas where there has been little previous investment.

**Mary-Jane Rivers**

## Passion, Pragmatism, Possibilities: Philanthropy NZ Conference 2009

Mark Cabaj, a principal at the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement, has been confirmed as one of three international speakers for next year's Philanthropy New Zealand Conference in Wellington 18/19 March. Mark is also the Director for *Vibrant Communities*, which is a Canadian network of communities and national organisations exploring the potential of collaborative, comprehensive approaches to substantially reducing poverty. He is currently focused on the techniques and capacities that public, private and non-profit organisations and residents require to make progress on complex issues such as neighbourhood renewal, community safety, education, homelessness and poverty. Mark has a particular interest in leadership, governance, strategic planning, evaluation and policy change in community change initiatives. Visit [www.tamarackcommunity.ca](http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca)



Mark is not new to New Zealand, or New Zealanders, and *Inspiring Communities* is looking forward to welcoming him back, presenting a workshop with him at the Philanthropy NZ Conference and working with him in a range of other forums. We'll keep you posted.

For more details about the Philanthropy NZ Conference contact [info@philanthropy.org.nz](mailto:info@philanthropy.org.nz)

## Building sustainable urban communities: Have your say.

Most New Zealanders live in cities. Shaping sustainable quality urban environments is essential to the well-being of our communities. The Sustainable Urban Development Unit is an inter-agency team hosted by the Department of Internal Affairs. The Unit is currently consulting on key challenges facing our cities, including housing affordability, changing demographics and climate change under the banner of *Building Sustainable Urban Communities*.

The discussion document outlines a new 'place-based' approach which could be used to bring together these key elements. The focus is on using new and existing tools and powers to create unique solutions for urban places, rather than using a standard formula to apply to all urban areas throughout the country. This type of approach overseas has delivered more lively and vibrant communities.

Submissions close on 28 November 2008. These can be made on-line at [www.dia.govt.nz](http://www.dia.govt.nz) or by sending a hard copy your submission by post to:

Sustainable Urban  
Development Unit  
Department of Internal Affairs  
PO Box 805  
Wellington 6140  
New Zealand

For a printed copy of the 'Building Sustainable Urban Communities' discussion document, email [sudu@dia.govt.nz](mailto:sudu@dia.govt.nz) or call 0800 824 824.

## Useful websites

You want to solve problems together in your community? For fabulous tools and processes that have been tried and tested have a look around Social Analysis Systems<sup>2</sup> (SAS<sup>2</sup>) [www.sas2.net](http://www.sas2.net). The tools help people with situations that do not lend themselves to easy solutions designed by experts alone but need to be addressed with the benefit of community knowledge and input.

Just one example is the *Role Dynamics* tool that helps you assess what stakeholders expect of each other as a result of a contract, a promise or a moral responsibility. Another example is the *Interests* tool which helps you evaluate the gains and losses that may result for different stakeholders involved in a complex problem or action.

[www.communityoutcomes.govt.nz](http://www.communityoutcomes.govt.nz) from the Department of Internal Affairs is a revamped and very accessible website bringing news, issues and events around local and central government working together for community outcomes in New Zealand.

**Newsletter compiled by:** Helen Wilson, Mary-Jane Rivers, Megan Courtney, Jenny Blagdon, Simon Cayley, Elaine Gill, Thalia Wright, Karen Clifford and John Prendergast

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