

Update No. 6 February, 2009

Welcome to the first issue of the *Inspiring Communities* newsletter in 2009. The recent national employment summit is an example of people who don't always come across each other in their daily lives, working together to help create solutions for New Zealand in challenging times. In neighbourhoods we know that if we get to know each other then we can support each other ... and not remain as suspicious strangers. In communities, the more we work together across the usual boundaries the more we can create innovative, useful, and 'owned' solutions. This is why *Inspiring Communities* fosters *the strength of loose ties*.

This issue is full of examples. In Matura, Southland a meeting of children, local residents, mana whenua, community organisations, funders, local government, service providers, and business developed a vision and practical plans for the area. Bliss Browne, from Imagine Chicago, facilitated this. Bliss describes Imagine Chicago as an initiative that has turned around a city of 7.5million people where many young people had opted out. There are examples of neighbours making connections, from Stewart Island/Rakiura to the North Shore of Auckland. There are notes from a tele-conference call hosted by the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement, involving New Zealander Rachael Trotman, about community roles in poverty reduction. We have an enthusiastic response from the Hon. Tariana Turia to *Inspiring Communities*, and some useful information for community workers and community groups under Opportunities and Resources.

Highlights from this issue are:

Bliss Browne working with Matura people to develop a vision for Matura

- ✂ Massey Matters news updates
- ✂ Getting to know your neighbours: ideas and resources
- ✂ Community roles in policies for reducing poverty: talking with Tamarack and the Caledon Institute
- ✂ Tariana Turia's comments on *Inspiring Communities* from Beehive Chats
- ✂ Opportunities: connect your community group with tertiary students to help you use the Internet more effectively; a new Ranui/Massey Neighbourhood Broker job opportunity, and a call for applications for the Department of Internal Affairs community internship programme
- ✂ Resources from Changes – a UK consultancy specialising in community engagement, community development and active citizenship

*Social sustainability is crucial to our future and our environmental sustainability aims. **Inspiring Communities** recognises this and has established an exciting new nationwide initiative, called the Exchange, where communities can connect, learn from each other, and build knowledge based on experience. It is a first for New Zealand and is already connecting communities from Tamaki to Taita, New Plymouth to Stewart Island.*

Anna Kominik, Director of Ideas Shop

Inspiring Communities is a nationwide group of communities committed to a new way of doing things. We support local communities to achieve 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.

Mataura Shares its Dreams



Mataura residents explored their dreams on a November Saturday last year at a one-day community workshop. Led by international community development facilitator, Rev. Bliss Browne, the meeting drew wide participation and demonstrated a unity of vision and depth of local resources that surprised many. Seventy residents and agency staff explored their vision of what was important, what areas needed to be worked on, how to find allies and begin acting on those needs. Mrs Browne described her background as banker, priest, mother, and civic activist and referred to her experience with *Imagine Chicago*, a project that had turned around a city of 7.5m people where many young people had opted out.



Mary-Jane Rivers and Bliss Browne

Asking questions was a vital first step to finding solutions, she said, such as what would make a dream possible and what would undermine it?

“We discovered they were not things that you might expect, like money. Money is never a driver,” she said.

Cynicism held the ultimate power. **“The most radical thing you can do is renounce cynicism,”** she advised. **“We learned the way we speak to each other actually creates the world we live in. “We get what we speak.”**

Involving children was the most effective way to change these habits of thoughts and to create a positive environment, and Mrs. Browne demonstrated this in action through involving the children of the Mataura school choir in all facets of the days activities. **“It takes a child to inspire a village,”** she told the group. “The one thing you can rely on to be constructive is to get young people involved and having the opportunity to offer their ideas.”

She led the young people through the process of turning their questions into invitations, rather than exhortations of what others should or must do to bring about change.

Communities were driven by the power of the volunteer. Telling them what they ought to do provokes resistance. It is much more successful to engage them in a way that unlocks their willingness to participate.

She set groups to express their visions in colourful dream trees, then to listen to each other for the patterns emerging.

Underpinning many suggestions was a desire for community unity and respect for diversity, working together on projects to provide sporting and cultural opportunities for youth, activities for the elderly, environmental issues, business development, including hopes for the new community centre to become a point of focus. Participants expressed surprise there was such similarity, and felt inspired and positive about the future.



Bliss Browne with Jasper Bruce, Mariana Tuhakaraina, Livia Qasevakatini, Celine Johnston and Nikita Haywood

**Written by Rachel Eyre, Andrae Gold and Rosemarie Smith.
Photographs by Rosemarie Smith.**

Massey Matters

Community gets behind Triangle Park Opening

More than 700 Massey residents flocked to Triangle Park on a hot sunny November 30th for a family fun day. This was a collaborative effort by Massey Community House and Waitakere City Council Parks and Leisure to celebrate the re-opening of the playground, which features a 40 metre flying fox and spider frame. But the success was due to the participation and involvement of many more groups - from the local businesses in Don Buck Road who had provided superb prizes, to the EcoMatters Trust launching a 'green streets' initiative (sustainable households) project, and the stallholders from the regular Sunday Massey Market providing refreshments, arts and entertainment to the crowds. There were also interactive family games, neighbourhood support promotion and an open day at the adjoining community house.

"It felt like our event too, not just the Council's" said Jane Livingston, Massey Community House Coordinator. "It's helped our community house think about new things we could be doing to connect with our local community – from hosting more events in the park to helping initiate a local business association."

Singing the praises of the Massey Marvels

The title *Massey Marvel* is given to individuals and organisations who have demonstrated caring behaviour to those in the Massey community. The twelve latest award winners were presented with their title at the Massey Matters October Community Forum – making a grand total of 37 award winners for 2008. *Massey Marvel* recipients are inspirational people and groups representing a range of organisations and backgrounds. To give just three random examples from the impressive October round, there is Su Mee from Moire Market, who provides bread and fruit to the West Harbour Homework Club each week, Pava Saifoloi from the Vasa Pasifika Young Pacific Leaders Programme which works with at-risk young people in Massey, and Gwen Nash who has been a tireless advocate and worker for over thirty years for the Massey community.

The Massey Marvels awards are a joint initiative of Violence Free Waitakere and the Massey Matters initiative (which is supported by Waitakere City Council). The quarterly community awards highlight and acknowledge the important contribution made, often by unsung heroes/heroines, to their community's cohesion and wellbeing.

This information was taken from the Massey Matters Newsletter Issue 6, 2008, available at www.waitakere.govt.nz/ourpar/pdf/2008/massematters/mm-dec08.pdf

Getting to Know Your Neighbours

Stronger community connections, protected weka and thriving tourism

The Halfmoon Bay Habitat Restoration Project, Stewart Island/Rakiura, is part of the activities of the Stewart Island/Rakiura Community Environment Trust (SIRCET). *'It is about our community stepping forward to protect the treasured native wildlife around our homes and gardens, along our local walks and on our beaches. It occurs almost entirely on privately-owned land'* – a micro example of private-public partnerships.



L - R: Ronnette, Ronaldo, Ronet, Runty and Ado-Run-Run. Ronnie himself can be seen with the transmitter just visible in his feathers.

Local volunteers and staff often find themselves needing to visit private properties to run rat and possum traps, monitor native species or provide advice ... and in the process develop friendships, build a strong neighbourhood and contribute to the economic wealth of Stewart Island/Rakiura through attracting the interest of the 35,000 tourists.

As part of the Restoration Project five volunteers have 'adopted' a Stewart Island weka, after these endangered birds returned to the main island of Rakiura in 2005. Each bird has a radio transmitter, smaller than a matchbox, which is fitted like a backpack and can be tracked down using an aerial and receiver.

The monitored birds have not quite grasped the concept of human land ownership or property boundaries! Volunteers are never sure where they will wind up when they set off each week. Matt Jones' story of tracking 'his' weka is a great example of local project ownership and of the relationships forged out of crossing property boundaries.

Matt said *"one week we thought we'd try tracking him on our own and started at Nicol Road, assuming he'd be in the same place. Wrong! We tried Trail Park and Observation Rock, but found nothing. Petersen Hill rewarded us with a faint signal towards Ringa Ringa. As we walked through the Deep Bay Track the signal got stronger and led us past three houses. The beeps were strongest somewhere near Nancy & Murray Schofield's. How often do you get disturbed in the middle of the afternoon by two rain-soaked English people carrying a bright blue TV aerial, asking if they can follow a weka onto your land? Thank you, Nancy and Murray for kindly switching off the electric fence and allowing us to continue our quest!"*

Keen to get into a routine, Matt decided to track him once a week. So our next search began at Ringa Ringa. Ronnie – that was what Matt called him - was anything but routine and of course was not there! *We pointed the aerial towards the house of someone we didn't know and the signal went off the scale. So we introduced ourselves to Coral and asked if we could try to find Ronnie in her garden. She was both delighted and amused to hear the story about Ronnie and we agreed to pop in for a chat afterwards.*

Tracking Ronnie has never been boring and his pièce de résistance came while Matt was leading a bus tour later that same week. Mid-sentence his commentary came to a complete halt as Ronnie strolled out of Ringa Ringa Golf Course trailing three tiny, black, fluffy chicks!

The chicks were soon dubbed "The Ronnettes". Ronnie and his family have a growing number of guardians. *'We know we shouldn't anthropomorphise the animal kingdom, but it's hard not to be caught up in the excitement – success for both the SIRCET's weka project and the continuation of Ronnie's genes'.*

Praise for SIRCET

The important link between New Zealand communities, environment, tourism and the economy is highlighted by recent comments in the Southland Times made by Chris Howe, WWF New Zealand executive director (3rd January 2009). In a timely article on the Kyoto Protocols and the environment, Howe praises the work of the Stewart Island/Rakiura Community Environment Trust (SIRCET), saying: "Groups such as SIRCET are busy protecting their local environment and the plants and animals they share it with. For such groups, a healthy environment also means a lifeline for the local economy – of the 35,000 tourists that visit Rakiura each year, more than a third say the birdlife the Trust is working so hard to protect is a major draw card."

Kari Beavan

KYN NEWSLETTER LAUNCHED

An exciting new newsletter, *the Know Your Neighbours (KYN) Project News*, was launched this month, highlighting the trend toward focusing on a neighbourhood and community of place focus. This attractive and lively newsletter tells the stories of neighbourhoods where residents have made meaningful connections. One example is Cabello



Place in Glenfield, on Auckland's North Shore, where ten households comprising people of eight different ethnicities got together and are exploring ways to stay connected and support each other. There is also a summary of the background to the KYN project, which is supported by Lifewise and Takapuna Methodist Church, and an introduction to Rebecca Harrington, the project co-ordinator. Other news includes the reporting of positive results to a survey which are: 72% of residents of

Meadowood said they would like to see more connection between neighbours in the street and 40% are prepared to help their street become more connected. Further information about the KYN project is available from RebeccaH@lifewise.org.nz

Building communities the fun way - How to plan your street BBQ

A new and wonderful resource has been produced by Massey, Waitakere residents. This is a simple and comprehensive guide on how to plan your street BBQ which is based on practical experience. It is available on www.waitakere.govt.nz/OurPar/masseycommunity and shortly on www.inspiringcommunities.org.nz

Comments from the authors of this resource...

We live in a flat on a street in Massey East. We were new in the area, so to connect with our neighbours we decided to have a street BBQ. It was a great opportunity to meet and get to know the families living around us. Everyone had so much fun, our street started dreaming of what else we could do. It inspired us to believe that building a strong community was possible, so the following year we ran another street BBQ. This was even better than the first, as we all planned and organised our street BBQ together.



The authors and their neighbours

Street BBQs are a celebration of community life. We hope this will encourage you to begin the journey and start with your own street BBQ.

Good luck with organising something in your street!"

Rebecca Gover and Sarah Beisley

Community Roles in Reducing Poverty

Tamarack, the Canadian Institute for Community Engagement, hold regular tele-learning seminars on topics to do with communities becoming stronger. Early in February Rachael Trotman from Auckland joined a seminar discussing Community Roles in Poverty Reduction Policy. This was led by Mark Cabaj from Tamarack, and Sherri Torjman and Anne Makhoul from the Caledon Institute of Social Policy. This is such a relevant issue for New Zealand and we are delighted that Rachael took notes for *Inspiring Communities*. Helen Wilson has written up the main findings from Rachael's notes.



Sherri Torjman

Often there is little connection made between people working in communities to eliminate poverty and those designing interventions at a policy level. Mark Cabaj and Sherri Torjman have highlighted the need to engage communities more actively in policy work by making links between these two groups and their interactions. They identify two main approaches to poverty alleviation. Short term interventions or '*safety nets*' address immediate basic needs such as income, heating, housing, while '*spring board*' initiatives are longer term strategies which help people toward self-sufficiency, literacy, skills training, and the building of community assets and infrastructure.



For services such as early childhood, housing and education, public investment is clearly essential to ensure equity of access to basic services regardless of where people live. But at the same time there is a need to build social capital locally so that communities are empowered to address the problems arising from policy in ways that are place-based.

According to Mark, when deciding on a particular option the question that should be asked is "what is the best use of our time". He also urges people to tackle issues in manageable "chunks" and if something is self-evident there is no need to waste time providing an evidence-base.

Ten core policy areas have been identified for the reduction of poverty:

1. *Affordable housing* provides both a *safety net* and a *springboard* as good housing supports good health and opportunity.
2. Early childhood development is crucial for the future health of children. Quality childcare and parent support programmes can also offset some disadvantage for those from low socio-economic backgrounds.
3. *Education and literacy* are *springboards* out of poverty and essential for a healthy society
4. Work related training can respond to the labour market, taking into account current or future occupational shortages.
5. Income supplementation to top-up earnings, support living wages, or provide incentives to work by making "work pay".
6. Income replacement initiatives to help when there is high unemployment, sickness, disability, pregnancy, retirement, or caring for young children.
7. Disability income benefits need to be designed to meet the different incentives and support required by the huge number of people with disabilities who live in poverty.
8. Asset-based policy to help households and individuals create assets, personal savings, businesses and home ownership.
9. Social infrastructure for safe community spaces and community design.
10. *Place-based interventions* which have the *engagement of residents*, and/or respond to existing communities of interest.

Mark Cabaj will be in New Zealand from 18-27 March. He will be hosted by *Inspiring Communities* and is a keynote presenter at the upcoming Philanthropy NZ Conference on 18-19 March.



Further reading

Torjman, S. 2008. *Poverty policy*. Available: www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/720ENG.pdf

Caledon Commentary. 1999. *Dumb and dumber government rules*. Caledon Institute of Social Policy. Available: www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/dumb.pdf

Caledon Commentary. 2008. *The forgotten fundamentalist*. Caledon Institute of Social Policy. Available: www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/727ENG.pdf

The Hon. Tariana Turia, MP for Te Tai Hauauro, talks about Inspiring Communities

Last week I found out about a project that got me really excited. The project, "*Inspiring Communities*" immediately attracted my attention by a key statement, "For too long, we have looked to governments or to expert individuals for solutions when many of the answers lie with us".

The project focuses on community development with an emphasis of establishing a network of communities who want to work collaboratively. It operates an 'exchange' which links communities together to share the way in which they have linked local resources, energy and ideas to fix local problems.

In Waitakere they have 'neat street' where fences have been painted, litter picked up, a jumbo bin filled, a barbeque lunch shared, and a community transformed. In Glen Innes, three Pacific churches got together and planned a programme of aerobics classes, healthy eating, health advice and fitness training. In Cannons Creek the people of Porirua united to fight the loan sharks and tackle indebtedness. The Good Cents project is working with families to reduce the rates of interest being charged to them.

I remember a couple of years ago, a community garden that was created in Kea Street, here in Whanganui. While the primary outcome was to work co-operatively to grow fruit and vegetables for the community, there were many other spin-offs, including neighbours learning to trust in each other and to watch out for one another.

Of course this is a concept that our families along the River have always known works. Our families at Pipiriki, Koroniti, Kaiwhaiki, Ranana, Hiruharama have always lived together and demonstrated their pride in managing and driving their own development.

Sometimes, our news is littered with stories of neighbourhoods described as 'dysfunctional'; communities criticised, streets vilified. The *Inspiring Communities* project reminds me just how fantastic some of our community projects are. I'd really love to hear your stories – send me an email at tariana.turia@parliament.govt.nz or ring my office 0800 488 742.

From "Beehive Chat" Tuesday 16 December 2008

Opportunities

Make connections with help from yMedia Challenge 365

- ✦ How can my community group connect with young people?
- ✦ How can we use low-cost and free internet tools to make day-to-day tasks easier and more effective?
- ✦ The yMedia Challenge 365 connects your community group with tertiary students to help you use the Internet more effectively and connect with young people. *yMedia* has worked with over 30 community groups in the past two years. Check out our story here: <http://www.ymediagroup.org>

Our vision is to provide meaningful career paths for young people through work experience placements.

We need 25 community groups for new projects in 2009
Students will gain practical work experience through a real-world project
You get to choose the dates and length of the project

Don't know where to start? We can help you with that too.
Register your interest here: www.ymediachallenge.co.nz and come along to an information session in your area.

Sustainable Neighbourhood Development Broker - Massey/Ranui

Waitakere City seeks an experienced and passionate individual to develop and implement an exciting new project based in Massey and Ranui that involves working with local residents and agencies to turn ideas into action.

Engaging with residents at street level; the successful applicant will need:

- ✓ an understanding of sustainable community development principles
- ✓ commitment to using community-led processes to achieve community-driven outcomes
- ✓ the ability to build strong relationships across diverse networks
- ✓ creative problem solving
- ✓ experience in working with others to respond to complex challenges in new and empowering ways.

This position is fixed term - full time with flexible working hours as some evening and weekend work will be required.

Vacancy closes 13 March 2009. Please contact: Cissy Rock, Community Development Broker, Leisure Services, Community Wellbeing, Waitakere City Council - Cissy.Rock@waitakere.govt.nz

Community Internship Programme – Department of Internal Affairs

Applications close 6 March

The Community Internship Programme funds community groups with identified development needs to employ skilled professionals from the public, private or community sector as interns for three to six months at no cost to the organisation. It focuses on skills sharing and the exchange of knowledge between sectors and community organisations, building ongoing relationships and networks which continue after the internship ends.

The Community Internship Programme is a three way partnership designed to strengthen community organisations, increase understanding, and encourage cooperation between the government, local authority, private business and community sectors.

Grants from the Community Internship Programme allow non-profit community organisations to pay the salaries of staff with high-level skills to work as interns, helping community groups to improve their services, to plan strategically and become more effective.

What kinds of internships will be funded?

Each community organisation will have different skill needs. A community group will need to identify the area for development and be clear about the project they want an intern to complete during the internship. An internship project may focus, for example, on developing policy and procedures, strategic planning, or developing systems.

Who can apply?

The host, the intern or the home organisation can start discussions for setting up an internship, but an application for Community Internship Programme funding must come from the host community organisation and be jointly signed by all partners. In some situations, regional advisors from the Department of Internal Affairs may be able to link a host with an appropriately skilled intern. The intern must hold a position within a government, private, community or voluntary sector organisation and cannot be a consultant or contract worker.

www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/wpg_URL/Services-Community-Internship-Programme-Index

Resources

Changes is an independent consultancy in the UK specialising in community engagement, community development and active citizenship. Look under 'services' on www.changesuk.net for a full list of their services. *Inspiring Communities Update* spotted two particularly useful resources on the *Changes* website :

'Voice': 'Voice' is a tool which helps community groups and networks to assess and improve the influence they have on agencies and partnerships. The 'axis' in 'voice' plots existing capacity to influence against how influential the group feels. It can be used to: assess and monitor community influence, prompt discussion and debate within groups and help plan how to become more influential.

A framework called **'Echo'** helps public agencies as they consider their 'potential to respond' to public and community issues and approaches. A research report can be downloaded from the website. UK public sector feedback includes the following comments:

- *It is an easy toolkit*
- *It could help with the Community Engagement Strategy development thought process*
- *It could provide us with a baseline of where we are – and an action plan*
- *It made me think differently – more deeply into what outcomes could be*
- *it turns the intangible into the tangible*

This newsletter has been produced by Helen Wilson, Mary-Jane Rivers and Kari Beavan. Thanks to , Anna Kominik, Cissy Rock, Rachel Eyre, Andrae Gold, Rosemarie Smith, Rachael Trotman, Jenny Chilcott, Hon Tariana Turia's office, Mark Cabaj, Rebecca Harrington, Rebecca Gover, Sarah Beisley, Patrick McCombs and Megan Courtney for information and to those who provided the wonderful photographs. The next newsletter will be March 2009.

Website: www.InspiringCommunities.org.nz **Email:** exchange@InspiringCommunities.org.nz
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