

# Community

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Overcoming  
disabilities  
and learning  
to swim

 Out there,  
around here.



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## Community

*Community* is the official publication of YMCA Auckland.

*Community* provides YMCA a way to recognise the achievements of our members, individuals, teams and organisations that we work with and support.

We are pleased to be able to keep our wider community up to date with news of the work YMCA is engaged in and to share our successes with you. We hope you enjoy reading this issue of *Community*.

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## Editorial



**Inclusion and partnership – are the** two key words that leap out at me as I read the latest articles in our first edition of *Community* for 2015. These, to me, are some of the foundation markers of YMCA – and the reason why the organisation blends so seamlessly into community.

While we like to ‘do things’ by ourselves (that warm sense of ownership) – I regularly see partnerships (whether it be Revlon, Auckland Council, Diabetes NZ, Pharmaco, Canon – to name but a few) that add so much value and allow us to

provide an event, service or programme that one individual organisation would struggle to deliver – it also creates the opportunity to share outcomes, successes and values that are beneficial to all involved.

Equally – inclusion (whether - age, gender, ethnicity, physical, intellectual, health, financial capability etc) is a barrier that, I know, we try extremely hard to remove (where-ever and when-ever we can). It is heartening to read about (and see) the impact that has on individuals, groups and our communities – long may it continue.

If I reflect a little – I do hear the words partnership and inclusion used often in the world of business but, unfortunately, I don’t always see it in action with much regularity. It takes a special organisation, special people and real commitment to ‘walk the talk’ when it comes to being truly inclusive and willing to partner. Few, in my humble opinion, understand, try hard enough or get it right.

Just to add some reality - YMCA doesn’t get it right all the time either but what I do see in our organisation, the people that work within it and the partners we choose to work with - is a genuine interest and willingness to bridge gaps, work with like-minded people and organisations and to make a meaningful difference – which is a healthy culture to embrace.

Anyone that knows me well will understand the connection I have with the ideals of inclusion and partnerships and perhaps understand why YMCA holds a special place for me (and many others that know it well also).

Peter Fergusson  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**  
YMCA Auckland

**OUT THERE, AROUND HERE**

*Stories about YMCA services out there, around here in our local communities*



# Overcoming disabilities *and learning to swim*



**A**s a nation surrounded by water, swimming and aquatic fun are virtually a kiwi rite of passage. At YMCA Auckland, we believe that anyone can learn to swim, and for the last two years Helen Vann has been on a mission to prove it.

Helen is based at Lagoon Pool & Leisure Centre managed by YMCA, and teaches the Abilities Swim preschool programme, which is a class for children who have disabilities. It's specifically catered to children who aren't able to enter mainstream swimming classes, or who would benefit from a programme that can cater to their individual needs.

Classes are open to anyone with a disability, be it intellectual or physical. "I've had all kinds of students," says Helen. "I find that they can have a variety of syndromes and conditions."

Helen plans each class but is aware that it's never possible to adhere to it too strictly, so she keeps each session flexible and adaptable to the abilities of the people she is working with. She explains that "sometimes individuals aren't able to come because they're sick or they've got an appointment scheduled for that time, so then they miss a session or two. Essentially I run a group class that's for individuals and take everybody's different levels into account. Someone might have learnt to float, while another person might need to focus on jumping in the water."

While there's a whole scope of activities, games, and equipment that Helen uses, what's really important is that people have an opportunity to socialise

and learn through play. The children can choose what kind of games they like to play; in the last lessons in December, for example, they chose to sing Christmas carols while playing in the pool.

Being in the pool is an effective form of physical therapy for many, because it allows the swimmer's muscles to relax, and in doing so, gain more movement. Many physiotherapists suggest that their clients take the Abilities Swim programme and some have even come along and joined in so that they can learn more about it, help their patients in the pool, and even give Helen some extra pointers!

Over the last two years, Helen has helped several children who weren't able to walk learn to do just that in the pool. As a result of that increased mobility, they were then able to walk on land, which is a pretty astounding achievement.

One of the most rewarding cases that Helen can remember is a pair of twins that she taught. "One of the twins had some developmental delay, while the other was physically fine. After tutoring them, both were brought up to a good level of swimming ability. The twins entered mainstream swimming classes together, and it's really rewarding to know that they're now able to take classes together, and that they're essentially at the same level as each other."

Helen believes that the Abilities Swim programme upholds YMCA Auckland's values around caring for the whole community, in encouraging everybody to take part and feel included in aquatic play, whatever their abilities. ▼

*Being in the pool is an effective form of physical therapy for many, because it allows the swimmer's muscles to relax, and in doing so, gain more movement.*

# *Helping young people* **be their best selves**

**Revlon New Zealand has been** supporting YMCA Auckland for several years. In that time, they have supported the organisation in a number of ways, including donating thousands of dollars of prizes and goodie bag content for the Walk the Line Fashion Show, through to providing raffle prizes which helped fundraise to send deserving families to Family Camp at YMCA's Camp Adair.

Christina Fairhurst, Australasia Training Manager and New Zealand Public Relations & Promotions Manager has been going to her local YMCA gym for over twenty years, and her brother in law is ex CEO of YMCA Auckland, John Fairhurst.

Worldwide, Revlon are known for their philanthropic activities, and in New Zealand they support the 'Look Good Feel Better' organisation, which works alongside women with cancer. Additionally, Revlon supports ID Fashion - Emerging Designers, which aids young, upcoming fashion designers; and Dress for Success, who prepare women from disadvantaged backgrounds for getting into the workforce. Revlon also are proud to support charities via smaller product donations for fundraising activities.

Revlon fund organisations and show support on a project-by-project basis, and enjoy giving to organisations that support and empower women. Christina says, "YMCA Auckland are fantastic. We like to support them because they work to foster and grow confidence in our young people."

Christina believes that YMCA Auckland and Revlon's values align. "We like to give back to the community

via positive organisations like YMCA. YMCA visibly grows and develops our young people as well as supporting people through all stages of their lives."

For Christina personally, YMCA is an organisation close to her heart. "A personal objective of mine is to support young people to be their best selves. YMCA does this and more through camps, workshops, fashion shows and programmes.

*Christina says, "YMCA Auckland are fantastic. We like to support them because they work to foster and grow confidence in our young people."*

They provide a safe, supportive environment where young people are encouraged to be their best selves."

Niamh Wingate, YMCA Auckland Fundraiser, says Revlon are a huge support to the organisation and "they are supremely easy to work with and nothing is ever too much trouble." Look forward to more shared initiatives over the coming years. ▼

**REVLON**

# YMCA Auckland helps BMX Champions take on the world



## Two daredevil siblings, Zoe and

Jayden Flemming, are BMX champions who regularly represent New Zealand in overseas competitions. In August 2014, they approached Glen Innes Pool and Leisure Centre managed by YMCA, looking for gym sponsorship to help them train. In their mission to build stronger kids, stronger families and stronger communities, Glen Innes Pool and Leisure Centre were excited to help Zoe and Jayden achieve their goals, and offered them a 12 month membership to the gym.

Since then, the fearless duo has been training hard, working alongside several personal trainers. As you might imagine, the Flemming siblings already have some training equipment at home, but they needed extra strength training to give them an edge in competitions, and weren't sure how to get it without additional assistance.

Adrian Shepherd is one of the personal trainers who has been working alongside the siblings, and has helped to create a 12 week programme that has built up their strength. "They already have the cycling technique down, but need to understand how to use their body movements and muscle activations to improve their power output," explains Adrian. "We've done a lot of explosive strength training, which involves lunges, squats, and some pretty heavy weights. The programme has

been pretty much identical for both siblings except for the weights, and other small tweaks here and there."

In the months that the Flemmings

have been training at Glen Innes Pool and Leisure Centre, Adrian says that he has definitely noticed a difference in how they get on in the gym now, compared to when they joined. "They're faster out of the gate now, and that will serve them well in the competitions."

Surprisingly, Adrian hasn't actually had a chance to watch the pair race (possibly because BMX competitions aren't so common in New Zealand). However, at the time of writing this, they're currently competing at the Australian National Series, where BMX racing is more popular, and Adrian hopes that they bring back a medal or two. In fact, this is the peak BMX racing season, and Jayden is proud to have been selected as captain of the New Zealand team abroad. Says Adrian "I've seen their confidence build as they've gotten stronger, and I'm sure they'll do well and get a good result."

There won't be much downtime after the Australian National Series, as Zoe and Jayden will be heading to Belgium for the World Championships! That's why the 12 week programme has been so important in terms of getting good, quick results for the Flemmings - a lot is now riding on them.

Zoe is enthusiastic about the support that she and her brother have received from YMCA. "The support and encouragement we have already received is something we could have never expected. The trainers have taken us on and done everything possible to ensure we can achieve to the best of our ability. The one-on-one sessions with their brilliant personal trainers mean we already know their support is going to get us to where we want to be. We're both beyond thankful!"

No matter how the Flemmings do in their competitions, YMCA is proud to have been able to help these community heroes. Their training will continue in the coming months, and it's hoped that all of their hard work pays off. ▼



# Coming together for the community: **Massey Library and Leisure Centre**



**In 1999 Massey Library and Leisure Centre** was custom-built by Auckland Council, designed as a fitness and social hub for locals with a library, ECE centre, community rooms and full fitness facilities onsite. Over the years, the Centre has become a special place for the local Massey and West Auckland regional community, attracting more than 200,000 visitors a year. The two separate entities operating from the Centre are Massey Library and Massey Leisure Centre operated by YMCA.

The relationship between the two entities has been “very fruitful” according to Cameron Kerr, Centre Manager for Massey Leisure Centre. “We really understand each other’s business and have a fantastic relationship with the Library

team.” With the Council operating the Library and YMCA operating the Leisure Centre, they frequently share resources and staff, coming together jointly to provide services for the community, such as holiday programmes, face painting, ‘superheroes’ day, interactive games, story time and more. “Working together allows us to deliver exceptional service to those who come here, creating a greater impact to the community,” says Cameron.

Christine Calis, Children and Teen’s Librarian, agrees. “We have a wonderful relationship with the YMCA team. We are always sharing resources, just this week we had an Australian storyteller visit the library and the YMCA staff brought the children over from the centre to listen to him. Similarly, our children

frequently head over to the gymnastics programme after being with us.”

The centre acts as a “one stop-shop for the community. One example is the never2old group of seniors from YMCA who complete their weekly programme at the gym, then head over to issue books afterwards,” says Christine. Cameron agrees. “It’s great being in such close proximity, it makes access so much easier for everyone.”

Together, through funding from Massey Matters, the two entities deliver extended holiday programmes for free to the community. These programmes are targeted at families who aren’t able to get away from Auckland during the holiday period. “Parents are always very happy that their children can burn off some energy, especially



# History meets modern day

## *in new YMCA Auckland City Centre fitout*

**YMCA Auckland has had new** life breathed into it throughout the years, while preserving the important elements of its past. So too has the iconic fitness premises at the top of Auckland's CBD, on the corner of Pitt Street and Greys Avenue, which was renovated in late 2014 to better meet the needs of the community.

According to the record books, the gymnasium downstairs in the Auckland City Centre was last overhauled in the early 1970s, so it was certainly time to let the builders have a crack at modernising it. Completed by the end of 2014, the improvements haven't come at the expense of the important history that the premises contains.

A perfect example is a special stained glass window, that was once a part of the 1912 Auckland City building.

The window now takes pride of place in the new fitness centre, thanks to the generous donations of members back in 2004 to cover its restoration. Similarly a plaque takes pride of place on one of the new walls as a tribute to the fundraising efforts of the community back in the 1970s. People in those days were gifted an engraved brick, in recognition of their generosity, before these bricks were used to construct one of the old centre's walls. In this way YMCA was, quite literally, building communities.

It's clear YMCA Auckland's philanthropic history is immense and the organisation is firmly woven into the fabric of daily life in the central city. 2015 is set to be an incredible one as YMCA Auckland are set to continue building stronger kids, stronger families and stronger communities. ▼

on wet days!" says Christine.

Planning programmes and sharing space within the centre between the two businesses is down to a fine art, says Cameron. "Council have different operational timelines to us, so we sit down with the team from the library a few months out and plan what we would like to deliver together." Cameron says that the success of joint initiatives comes down to an alignment of business values and objectives. "Both businesses are supplying an excellent service to the community, and we believe in the quality of our programmes and staff. Both businesses have a passion for young people and giving them skills to grow." ▼



## SUPPORTING YMCA

Summaries of charitable trusts and individuals who are supporting YMCA

*YMCA Auckland want to sincerely thank all of the funders for their generous donations over the last quarter, which have contributed to the community-based work we have been able to do.*

FUNDER	VALUE	CAUSE
FEBRUARY		
AK Council Funding Agreement	\$15,000	Mt Albert Community and Recreation Centre managed by YMCA Kids in Parks 2015
Massey Matters	\$3,000	Massey Leisure Centre managed by YMCA Raise up workshop
Henderson-Massey Local Board	\$1,000	Massey Leisure Centre managed by YMCA Holiday Programme
Strengthening Communities Fund	\$7,500	YMCA North Shore Recreation Centre Raise up Events
West Community Wellbeing & Youth Fund via Henderson-Massey LB	\$5,000	Massey Leisure Centre managed by YMCA Raise Up camera and lights equipment
Hibiscus&Bays Local Board	\$4,500	Shakespear Lodge Emergency Response Equipment





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