

Community

A PUBLICATION OF YMCA AUCKLAND

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Kids in Parks 2015

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Banking on YMCA Auckland*
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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



Welcome back to another edition

of *Community*. We've been out and about recently and it's exciting to be able to share with you about all that's been happening.

The success of Kids in Parks, an event that we've partnered with the Albert-Eden Local Board on was another hit this year for the local community. The event took place across nine locations and the YMCA got to be part of helping the families that participated, engage in the activities that were made available to the community.

One of my favourite stories you'll read in this issue comes from our centre in Hamilton. An 11-year-old boy by the name of Ethan has been training with Rachel, a PT at the gym to help delay the process of being wheelchair bound for the rest of his life. A disheartening and scary future for someone so young to be told this, but with the help of YMCA, he no longer has to fight the challenge on his own.

In some ways this edition of *Community* will take you on an emotional journey but I hope it lifts your heart and eyes to see why we do what we do. Our focus as an organisation is 'people', helping them to be the best they can be, and for us it's what keeps the engine going and the wheels turning on this 160 year old organisation.

Peter Fergusson

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

YMCA Auckland

OUT THERE, AROUND HERE

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

A photograph of two children outdoors. The child on the left is a girl with dark hair, wearing a pink shirt and a blue wristband, holding a magnifying glass over her eye. The child on the right is a boy with blonde hair, wearing a red plaid shirt, smiling broadly with his hand near his mouth. The background shows green trees and a blue sky with white clouds.

KIDS IN PARKS 2015

Riding on the success of YMCA's vision to bring communities together across the Auckland region, Kids in Parks returned in 2015 even bigger and better than before. The series of family-friendly events was run in collaboration with Albert-Eden Local Board with the idea of encouraging young children and their families to have some fun together on the weekends while networking and making connections with other people in their local community.

Making use of the city's plentiful parks and recreational areas, Kids in Parks was designed as a way for children to experience social interaction in a safe, interactive and friendly setting. Times are changing in New Zealand, and across the world, with more time than ever being spent on electronic devices and tuning into various media channels. The days of learning, experiencing new things and interacting with friends old

and new in our spare time are sadly becoming fewer and further between. Turning this around and injecting fun activities back into our community is an important part of YMCA Auckland's 'Out There, Around Here' ethos and makes the cornerstone of the Kids in Parks series.

"Our aim is to keep children informed, interested and engaged through our Kids in Parks fun days," confirms Kev Carter, Community Development Manager for Mt Albert Community and Recreation Centre managed by YMCA. "We want to see them happy to be outdoors with good company on their weekends - hopefully this will encourage them to keep active and healthy."

Encouraging peer-to-peer interaction is just one value that YMCA feels is important. Kids in Parks is also an opportunity for youngsters to learn about public courtesy and remember to treat the environment around them with

as much respect as they would a fellow person. Each location in the event series featured a designated waste station with capacity for compost, recycling and landfill, to encourage the proper disposal of rubbish accumulated on the day.

Rolled out over nine locations within the Albert-Eden ward, the chain of free events were spread over six weeks during February and March on Saturdays between late morning and mid-afternoon, a perfect time for energetic children to head out and play in the sunshine. To start the ball rolling, Valentines Day saw a family-orientated Teddy Bear's Picnic held in Potters Park, Balmoral. While this event was pitched at pre-school aged children, there was something for everyone across the programme, with several events catered to intermediate children. Ranging from interactive sports to skateboarding and play events, the Kids in Parks series has something for everyone's liking. ▼

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Foundation North: Banking on YMCA Auckland

Foundation North (formerly ASB Community Trust) have been supporting YMCA Auckland since 1990, when the first recorded grant application was made. Since then, Foundation North has funded many projects for YMCA Auckland, including the most recent grant of \$30,000 for the operational costs of YMCA Auckland's Raise Up programme. Foundation North is one of 12 community trusts operating in New Zealand, and is the biggest not-for-profit funder in New Zealand, if not Australasia. Founded in 1988 from the trust bank era, Foundation North rebranded from the ASB Community Trust on the 7th of April 2015 and has distributed more than \$800 million in grants to date.

Being a philanthropic funder, Foundation North has a strategic plan, regularly funding grants across three funding areas: people, places and participation. Each includes a number of strategic objectives and these objectives determine which organisations are funded. Each year Foundation North funds around \$40 million in grants.

Over the years, Foundation North has supported YMCA Auckland by funding a number of grants, including facility development grants, equipment, and facility upgrading funds, with grants totalling more than \$2 million since applications began.

Raewynne Jacobs, Foundation North Funding Programme Manager says that YMCA Auckland is a popular choice among trustees, as the organisation does so much for

the community. "We give grants on a project by project basis; it really depends what applications come in. We give more than 600 grants a year, which are both big and small, and grants can range from a thousand dollars to several million."

Given that the Trust has strict criteria in terms of what is funded, YMCA Auckland has been fortunate



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Tāmaki ō Tai Tokerau*

to find a faithful and much appreciated funder in Foundation North. Aiming to create significant positive change through supporting innovative projects and practices, Foundation North is making a huge contribution to helping YMCA Auckland do just that - building strong kids, families, and communities. ▼

James Toohey: Raising up!

According to recent research

by Auckland Council, there are almost 500,000 children and young people living in Auckland alone. That means almost 40% of Auckland's total population is under the age of 25. This figure rises to as high as 52% in some local board areas, but either way, has the potential to give vibrancy to Auckland, if the vision and energy of those young people are channeled. YMCA Auckland's youth development programme, Raise Up, is doing just that!

First established in 2002, Raise Up operates from eleven locations across Auckland, giving young people a safe and positive environment where they can individuate and test their own boundaries. The real reach of Raise Up goes far beyond that though, as the young people, or crew members, involved run drug and alcohol free events for their local communities, enabling their peers to also experience a safe environment in which to relax, socialise and achieve their goals.

One of Mt Albert Raise Up crew's shining stars is 17 year old, James Toohey, a student from Mount Albert Grammar School. James came across YMCA Auckland through his participation in the youth self-development programme, Duke of Edinburgh, which sees students build skills, engage in physical recreation activity and complete community work. Alongside the programme, James has been part of the Raise Up crew since early 2013. As James recently reflected on his second full year in the Raise Up crew, he named as chief among his 2014 highlights the National Youth Camp held at YMCA's iconic Camp Adair facilities in May, as well as his role MCing a 'Food Revolution Day' event and a Quiz Night at the centre. "I've loved it and it's really helped me to build my confidence," enthuses James.

Confidence isn't all that YMCA Auckland has helped James with,



however. James was also awarded a full scholarship to attend Outward Bound's 21 day watch in January. "It's awesome because a residential project is part of the Duke of Edinburgh Gold award and YMCA enabled me to achieve that," adds James.

Before setting out for Outward Bound, James' goals were to make new friends, conquer his fear of heights and develop new leadership skills that he can use during Raise Up meetings. James says his first adventure, a three day kayaking trip with a stay at Deep Creek, was an amazing way to quickly develop trust in the people in his group. "By the end of this part, I was already really good friends with 13 new people," he adds.

Rock climbing, high ropes, sailing

and tramping followed and by the time his solo stint came around, he was ready. James says, "I decided to do a lot of self-reflection and set goals for myself for 2015... I felt like during my solo, I had a productive three days and got the most out of them." Following his Outward Bound experience, James said "Thank you YMCA for giving me this opportunity. I have made life-long friends and had an experience I will never forget. Outward Bound has changed my life and I have gained many skills to use every day. I am now well on track to knowing what I want to do in the future and none of this would be possible without your help."

Getting set to head into 2015, James said he was "looking forward to building more confidence and meeting the new crew members we bring on... If any of them are shy, like I was, I'd like to help them, as a way that I can give back." As well as planning more fun and safe events for young people and bringing together the community, Raise Up also hosted a National Youth Camp at their iconic Camp Adair facility in April, to coincide with the school holidays and is getting even bigger and better, almost doubling its reach with four new Crews being set up in South Auckland, namely, Otara, Mangere, Clendon and Papatoetoe.

"The camp is always such a highlight for the kids," explains Kev Carter, Community Development Manager for Mt Albert Community and Recreation Centre managed by YMCA. "We play host to young people from other regions around the country and the Auckland crews love the opportunity to meet new people that they wouldn't get to mix with otherwise. Bringing that many motivated and ambitious young people together is pretty cool - there are always some awesome outcomes in terms of plans and initiatives that they then go and implement in their local communities. Watch this space!" ▼

One step at a time: Ethan Elder-Bickers



For a lot of people, the idea of getting up at 5.30 in the morning is rather draining. For Ethan Elder-Bickers, however, an 11-year-old boy from Hamilton, it's become a way of life for two mornings each week.

What makes Ethan's story even more impressive is that before he does this, Ethan has to put metal splints on his legs to help them work. This is something that he does every morning because Ethan has Muscular Dystrophy.

It was just over a year ago when Ethan first started showing signs of muscle weakness: "He was struggling to

get off the floor without help," his mother, Nikki, recalls. After a lengthy process of testing (some of which are still awaiting results) and further deterioration, Ethan finally received his initial diagnosis about six months ago. Two months later he was fitted with splints for his lower legs.

"Every day is a different challenge," Nikki says. "He no longer walks as far as he used to. He finds it hard to do things that you and I take for granted; opening a water bottle, carrying a cup with one hand, climbing stairs, getting in and out of a car, pushing or pulling some doors, anything that requires strength. His mind is an 11-year-old boy, but his

body is not. He gets very frustrated, very fatigued and, as you know, when you are fatigued, everything is harder."

While this would be unimaginably tough for anyone, Ethan has refused to let it get the best of him. This is why you'll find Ethan training at YMCA Hamilton's Fitness Centre four times a week, two of which are the reason for those early starts.

This all came about because Nikki is a member and asked Graeme, the Hamilton Centre Manager, if Ethan could come to Zumba to help with his movement, and a group fitness class called Muscle Sculpt. After meeting



YMCA and

Having been around for the

better part of two centuries, YMCA has had strong connections to major events, including World War I, which this year commemorates 100 years since the battle at Gallipoli. YMCA and the Great War, of course, are inextricably bound together; YMCA Auckland and other YMCA organisations were there, at the front, attending to the needs of the men at war.

For the first year and a half of the war, YMCA, alongside other organisations, opened places for soldiers and sailors to relax in London. Establishing places like this was only the beginning of YMCA's involvement in the war. In fact, the organisation went into action almost immediately, opening an appeal for funds to provide troops with welfare services. After a mere ten days, YMCA opened 250

centres throughout Britain to look after the servicemen, and within three months, over 100 YMCA centres throughout France.

YMCA was soon right up on the front lines looking after the troops. From 1915 onwards, every New Zealand Expeditionary Force travelling overseas included a YMCA field secretary, whose tasks included assisting the wounded on the battlefield and attending to those recovering in army hospitals, as well as seeking out supplies of chocolate, cigarettes and other "comfort items". Here in New Zealand, hospitality was extended to visiting navel servicemen, while volunteers raised funds for overseas YMCA activities.

Away from the dugouts and constant threat of sudden death, YMCA offered men the equivalent of a dormitory, club,

canteen, chapel, concert hall and enquiry bureau. YMCA secretaries helped organise, establish and maintain these activities. All of this was done out of a diverse range of locations, from chateaus and town halls, to farmhouses and cellars.

Regardless of the location, YMCA was there for the men; helping to make their unimaginably stressful lives a little more bearable. The association provided communication services for men about to go into battle and delivered photos of their families from back home, activities that were undoubtedly of immense value to the troops. They also ensured the men were entertained, delivering sporting equipment, books through a library service, educational lectures, and free concerts. Thousands of hot drinks were also given away each week.

Ethan and hearing his story, Graeme decided that Ethan, who, he says, is a “sweet kid”, would be gifted a full membership. Ethan is one of four young men with scholarships at YMCA’s Hamilton Centre, all of whom inspired Graeme to embrace YMCA’s philosophy of reaching out to those in need of help.

One of the trainers at the Hamilton Centre, Rachel, gives up her own time to personally train Ethan, helping him to maintain his programmes. His workouts are all low impact; small weights, biking, stretching and rowing. They focus on keeping his muscles flexible and functioning as well as they can. “It keeps him moving,” Nikki says. “Keeps him out of the wheelchair for now”.

While Ethan enjoys all of his training, Nikki says that his favourite is probably the rowing. “He and one of the staff and some other members have a challenge going on. They race each other and the one with the most metres after 90 seconds gets a Kit Kat bar.”

What really stands out for Ethan,

however, is the YMCA community; “If you were to ask Ethan his favourite time, I think weekends and evening are the best, as there are more people and his favourite staff are on,” Nikki adds.

The people at the YMCA are an important part of his experience, and it is obvious why this is the case; “All the staff that Ethan deals with have taken the time to get to know him, and encourage him to try his best,” Nikki says. “Some days he struggles with his workout, and I have seen staff and other members encourage him to keep working”.

Ethan clearly also inspires and strengthens the community around him; “I have been told by members that seeing Ethan trying so hard makes them want to work harder. So I guess it works both ways; he encourages them and they encourage him,” adds Nikki.

The staff have gone above and beyond for Ethan, and this is especially true of Graeme. “I can’t put into words how much Graeme has done for Ethan,” Nikki says. He recently arranged for

Ethan to go up in the Westpac Rescue Helicopter, which the youngster dreams of one day piloting. Ethan is, apparently, still raving about it. “Ethan made Graeme go up too,” Nikki recalls. “I found out later that Graeme is afraid of heights.”

It is easy to understand why Nikki is so appreciative for all the ways in which YMCA helps Ethan. There is a lot of uncertainty in their world otherwise. The exact type of Muscular Dystrophy Ethan has is still yet to be confirmed, and this information is needed to inform his treatment – if there is any available – and his long-term prognosis. Nikki says that this makes the process even harder: “Without a diagnosis we can’t get any funding or support, and feel we can’t move forward.”

Without the YMCA, life could be very different for Ethan. His time at the centre empowers him, giving him the strength to fight back against the adversity he is facing, get on with his life, and, perhaps most importantly, continue to be inspired. ▼

World War I

Things like these drinks may not seem like much now, but to the troops it could have meant the world. A New Zealand soldier, T.B. Drew, wrote to the Evening Post in Wellington in late 1917, explaining just that: “Have you ever felt tired – utterly tired, in mind and body, the strings all loose, five hours without a bite to eat or drink; in peril all the time of your life (though no-one admits it)? Then you can know what a wholesome bowl of warm cocoa tastes like, and you can appreciate the feelings of the men towards the officers of the YMCA, who sit up all night to minister thus to them”.

Of course, YMCA was also in the war more directly. In fact, over 200 members worldwide won decorations ranging from CBE to the French Croix de Guerre. Of the YMCA members enlisted for war service, 263 were from New Zealand.

They were also there for the good times, with YMCA staff members often being the ones to first welcome home released prisoners making their way out of Germany and Turkey after the armistice. In New Zealand, YMCA Auckland met returning ships and provided accommodation for repatriated servicemen, all of who were also offered 12 months of free YMCA membership.

The spirit and reverence of these efforts are still alive and well in the YMCA today. YMCA North Shore last month had an exhibit on the links between YMCA and WWI, telling the story of the organisation’s part in the New Zealand war effort. YMCA fitness instructor, Shirley McKain, was the force behind this exhibition. Before this, Shirley decorated her garden fence with red poppies to show her respects. The

positive response this got inspired her to start the display at her workplace, to further commemorate the war, to pay tribute to the efforts of YMCA, and to help with the education of young people.

Incidentally, the idea for the memorial poppy first came from a YMCA canteen worker, Moina Michael, while she was working at the YMCA Overseas War Secretaries’ headquarters. In November 1918, two days before the armistice was declared, she came across Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae’s poem In Flanders Fields, which begins “In Flanders fields the poppies blow, between the crosses, row on row”, and made a personal pledge to “keep the faith” and vowed to always wear a red poppy as a sign of remembrance, spreading this idea across the United States. ▼

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-APRIL 2015		
Blue Fitness	\$10,000	Funds to send staff to IHRSA Fitness Conference in USA
Blue Fitness	\$10,000	Fitness capability development
Sargood Bequest	\$5,000	For Raise Up across YMCA Auckland
Joyce Fisher Charitable Trust	\$40,000	For Raise Up across YMCA Auckland
Albert-Eden Local Board	\$965	Community centre resources for YMCA Mt Albert





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