



# Angel NEWS

AUTUMN 2017

## GRATEFUL SOMEONE FINALLY HEARD US

**A damp, rat and roach infested hovel with a P-lab next door isn't the sort of environment anyone would want for raising four young children. Estelle and Sam endured it for seven years as they waited for Housing NZ to transfer them. Then in 2016, they found out they were pregnant with twins. Housing Family Worker Maylene rushed to the rescue.**

It was 2007 when Estelle and Sam moved to the Manukau home which Housing New Zealand rented out to them. It didn't take long to discover it was infested by rats and roaches. Rats climbed in and out of drawers forcing the family to wash their clothes multiple times. Their four young boys had to clean themselves before and after school to keep from getting sick. No matter how tidy they kept their home, the infestation persisted. The tiny house also had no insulation whatsoever.

**'All my boys got sick there – meningitis, strep throat, rotavirus. You name it, they've had it. One of my boys has a rheumatic heart now and will need medication all his life.'**

The family were also never told that the house next door was a P-lab and under police investigation. They only found out when it exploded. Then, the ultimate tragedy came. Estelle and Sam lost a baby.

Estelle was persistent in her application for transfer but nothing was happening. In 2016, pregnant with twins and feeling desperate, Estelle got in touch with a Family Works Social Worker in School who then referred her to Housing Family Worker Maylene. Maylene sprang into action. She booked the couple an appointment with HNZ and helped them prepare their documents. When HNZ met the family, they finally understood and put them on the transfer right away. Maylene also made the couple aware of WINZ procedures and all the benefits they were entitled to.

Maylene's role falls under a two-year pilot programme that has been made possible through a bequest. From July 2016, Maylene has advocated for 78 families in all sectors – from government agencies to realtors.

# A YOUNG LIFE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA

Six-year-old Kristie\* witnessed her younger sister Kathryn\*, 4, fall into the pool. Kathryn was revived by emergency services and recovered in hospital, but her hysterical mum blamed Kristie for not keeping an eye on her. She told Kristie it was her fault that her sister almost died.

Upset and worried, Kristie's dad Eddie\* called Family Works to request counselling for Kristie. Through the medium of play therapy, including sand trays, Kristie was able to 'play out' her feelings in a safe environment. She was able to understand the accident and that she was not to blame.

During some of the sessions her dad was able to explain that big people were the ones responsible, not the children. Kristie said during one session that Dad keeps them all safe – he had put a fence around the pool. Kristie's now happy living with her dad and sister. Her mum sees them a few times a month and she misses her.

\*Names changed and model used to protect identity



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# MAKING POSITIVE CHANGES IN PRISON



Tom\* is about to be released from prison where he's been serving time. He's the father of two boys aged 8 and 3. He confessed that while his children lived with him 'crime came first'.

To prepare for his release Tom joined the Family Works Parenting in Prisons programme. He wanted to gain a better understanding of his children's needs, manage his defensive feelings, cope with his anger, and learn to navigate fatherhood.

Tom initially struggled during the sessions – especially in group activities – finding the idea of play foreign. He later revealed that he never played with his father. Instead, at 6 years old, he went to work with him on the farm because that was better than suffering abuse from his step-mother.

Despite his struggles, Tom was motivated to learn how to play and to use praise and encouragement to manage his children's behaviours. His new goals now include understanding the ages and stages of childhood development, and how trauma impacts brain development. He's already expressed desire to register for the Incredible Years parenting programme facilitated by Family Works.

\*Name changed and model used to protect identity

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