



# Northern NOTES

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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# UKULELE SESSION FIRES UP BLOKES CLUB



**Ukulele Ladies in action, entertaining at the Enliven Carruth Day Programme.**

Recently members of Enliven Hamilton's Blokes Club were treated to a delightful ukulele session. A talented group performed a set of lively songs which got the whole club cheerfully engaged and invigorated – especially when percussion instruments were passed around.

Studies have discovered that the aptitude and appreciation for music is an enduring skill in Alzheimer's patients, remaining even after other skills have faded.

'We are aware that watching a performance provides people with dementia a great degree of enjoyment, but when they are engaged on a personal level the benefits are even more significant. To this end, the musicians encouraged active participation from the Blokes Club members,' says Terri Miller, Team Leader for Enliven Hamilton Day Programmes.

Surprisingly, even those with severe dementia can sometimes remember the lyrics of their favourite songs and are able to sing along. This often helps them retrieve snapshots of the past.

The Hamilton Day Programme is hoping to purchase their own equipment and provide training to staff so they can deliver music sessions on their own. A similar activity was held at the Enliven Carruth Day Programme in Tauranga with equally positive and successful results.

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