

## A little help goes a long way

*When you are struggling to house and feed your children, other things that you would love to do for them are often out of reach. Paying for sporting or creative activities can be impossible.*

And if your child is finding learning a challenge, an assessment for learning disabilities is often well beyond the family budget. This is where CMM's work in schools, together with our Family Support Fund, can make a big difference in a young person's life.

CMM's Wellbeing team works in local primary schools, offering wellbeing support for tamariki and their parents/caregivers. Some of this work is through Mana Ake, a Te Whatu Ora initiative, and some through direct arrangements between CMM and the schools. In the last year the team has worked with nearly five hundred tamariki individually and with a similar number in groups. Parent groups have been attended by over five hundred parents/caregivers.

The work is mostly preventative: the 'ambulance at the top of the cliff.' It involves helping children learn about managing emotions, making and sustaining friendships and coping in stressful situations. Sometimes, just offering a listening ear to understand the problem, then providing a small amount of funding, can be transformative in a child's life.

For example, the Wellbeing team worked with R, a young girl who hated anything to do with physical activity. R would stay home on school sports days and avoid physical education. This made her anxious about attending school at all. She was on a path towards truancy.

When a Wellbeing team worker learned that R had sore feet, due to fallen arches, she

arranged for a podiatrist appointment and used the Family Support Fund to pay for orthotics. The change was immediate. The pain in R's feet disappeared. She went to a school athletics day and enjoyed it, even reporting that it was fun.

An understanding of the problem and a small amount of money was all it took for R's school life to be back on track towards confidence, participation and belonging.

Similar stories can be told for many tamariki. Lessons in drama or sports have not only taught new skills; they have led to self-confidence where this was lacking, to positive friendships where there had been none, and to management of emotions when these had been out of control.

For T, a child struggling with confidence and communication, kick boxing lessons have, a team worker reports, 'brought a real light and enthusiasm into T's communication. She is developing skills to make and maintain positive friendships and will have strategies she can use to help her manage her feelings.'

The Team have been able to apply to the Mayor's Welfare Fund or use the Mission's Family Support Fund to pay for assessments for autism and learning disabilities. One child, S, with significant  
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cognitive impairments, was able to have a full assessment of her learning needs. Her parents reported that: 'We have so appreciated access to this fund for S and the support of CMM. Without the funding, a cognitive assessment would not have been possible. The assessment will help clarify more targeted supports and teaching approaches to support her. We truly believe this will positively contribute to S's schooling future.'

The early years in school set the course for a child's entire school experience and their life beyond that. Small interventions can have profoundly positive long-term consequences.

From learning assessments to extra lessons, the children of families that are struggling miss out. A donation to our Family Support Fund will make a world of difference for a better tomorrow. Please make a gift at [www.mmsi.org.nz/donate](http://www.mmsi.org.nz/donate).

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## Helping children live less anxious lives

*Anxiety can be hard for children to manage but the CMM children's group programme Wise-Up offers a pathway through the tough times and provides hope that anxiety can be tackled.*

One child, Michael (not his real name) often refused to take part in classroom activities and was unable to deal with any sort of conflict, negativity or situations that did not go as planned. Michael often came to his teacher at these times and would remain with the teacher until he eventually felt ready to discuss the problem or recommence learning.

In the six weeks since taking part in Wise-Up, Michael's teacher has only once helped him resolve an issue, with Michael now able to remain engaged in classroom activities and solve problems himself, a significant improvement on previous behaviour.

Wise-Up continues to be one of CMM's most popular group programmes. It helps meet the needs of children with low to mid-level anxiety, or who struggle with difficult emotions, by gaining confidence and learning strategies for managing behaviour when anxiety arises. It is run every term in different schools and venues around Christchurch.

Our group programmes coordinator, Rowena Dawson, says the level of interest in Wise-Up from schools continues to increase, with six in-school programmes having been delivered this

year, in addition to three community Wise-Up programmes in Hornby and another booked for term 4. Interest in our other children's group programme, ACES, which helps children find ways to cope with parental separation, is high, with more Mana Ake kaimahi trained in ACES delivery.

We need Wise-Up more than ever. A Te Whatu Ora survey found that four percent of children aged five to 14 in the year to June 2022 had a diagnosed anxiety disorder, almost double the number 10 years ago. That's 34,000 children in our country today.

Wise-Up works. One parent described their child as having learnt how to calm himself when anxious. A teacher reported that a pupil returns from Wise-Up sessions happy and excited. One participant described learning a lot about their emotions and how to deal with feelings. A school reported that Wise-Up provides a valuable programme with engaging activities that pupils could relate to.

We'll be holding Wise-Up at Hornby in Term 1 next year. Please contact Rowena Dawson at [rowenad@mmsi.org.nz](mailto:rowenad@mmsi.org.nz) for more information.

Children shouldn't feel unduly worried about things. Please support Wise-Up or our other groups programmes with a donation. Go to [www.mmsi.org.nz/donate](http://www.mmsi.org.nz/donate) and select Group Programmes.

# Support a Family hampers bring hope

Christmas came early for CMM's Support a Family team, with the MediaWorks Foundation joining us as the appeal's 2023 media partner. We're grateful for their wonderful support and for the campaign notices that are already running on The Breeze, The Sound, and Magic to boost the pool of supporters for this year's appeal.

With the high cost of essentials tipping even more families into crisis, signing up additional supporters to gift hampers is more pressing than usual, says Support a Family coordinator Glenda Marshall.

"Last year our generous supporters made it possible for CMM to distribute hampers to 160 whānau," Glenda says. "We heard many stories about the relief and hope these Christmas hampers brought to struggling households at this special time of year."

You can share the Christmas spirit with a family who would appreciate a hamper by signing up now at [www.mmsi.org.nz/supportfamily](http://www.mmsi.org.nz/supportfamily) or follow the 'give a cash gift' link to use our secure online form and the team will build a hamper for a family on your behalf.

## Using play to unlock emotions

A grant from the Rātā Foundation has enabled CMM to set up a new therapy programme for children aged 2-12, a considerably younger age bracket than therapy usually caters to. Synergetic play therapy helps children explore and reprocess distressing memories through play, while a therapist supports the child by serving as an example of how to cope when distressed.

If the therapist identifies fear, for example, in the way a child plays, the therapist will show empathy in the way a parent would but also set an example of how to cope in fearful situations.

This helps the child change the way they see the world and gain a sense of mastery when faced with distress. Neural responses to that feeling or memory are repatterned, leading to less difficult and more positive behaviour.

Caregivers of the seven children who have benefitted from the programme with CMM report their children showing improved behaviour, having fewer nightmares, being less anxious. Other reported benefits include these children being more resilient, settled, empathetic, and willing to express feelings.

## Help the Christchurch Methodist Mission help others

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**You can also donate online by visiting [www.mmsi.org.nz/donate](http://www.mmsi.org.nz/donate)**



# A not at all common project

*We reported earlier in the year about the Kei Tua Atu I Te Kaupapa/Beyond the Brief award bestowed on the Housing First Ōtautahi Commons Project by Placemaking Aotearoa. The award came in the same month as The Commons' first year celebration of being a presence in the heart of the city.*

The Commons Project brings people experiencing long-term homelessness together every week to connect with each other, share kai and engage in creative activities. The project is located at the Gap Filler Commons site on the corner of Kilmore and Durham Streets.

Housing First Community Development worker Jono Kitt explains that the project is an effective way to ensure that those most vulnerable in the city have access to life-enhancing services such as the Christchurch City Libraries mobile library van and the Orange Sky laundry and shower van.

"We believe that by supporting and helping create these types of projects that it leads to a healthier community," says Jono. "It's more inclusive, breaks down barriers and it's showing that everyone has a voice and needs a place to belong." The range of onsite services and activities at The Commons has expanded over the past year and now includes regular art and music activities, with the White Room Creative Space bringing their mobile printing press along for Housing First Ōtautahi kaewa to create their own artworks.

Jono says that the regularity of weekly events provides an important opportunity for Housing First Ōtautahi workers to check in with those who are sleeping rough, and that it has helped the team reach more people in need of their support and who might otherwise have slipped between the cracks.

"The number of referrals completed for joining the Housing First Ōtautahi programme has been among the project's highlights" says Jono.

"From there appropriate support can be put in place which has eventually led to housing for some. It's important that this project continues to grow and more support comes onboard to journey along with members of our most vulnerable community."

In October the Commons Project put together a Street Art Exhibition at the LiVS Incubator in Cashel Mall to observe World Homeless Day in partnership with The White Room Creative Space, Life in Vacant Spaces, Creative Junk, and Telling Lives. The exhibition featured artwork created by Housing First kaewa available for purchase, including a range of items such as prints, bags, postcards, t-shirts and wrapping paper.

"Not only has The Commons become a safe place to meet and eat, it has provided kaewa access to services that can assist with physical, social and psychological inclusion. The team from Te Whatu Ora - Waitaha Canterbury bring their van that has helped educate and administer Covid shots, measles and influenza vaccinations," says Jono.

"Statistics New Zealand spent time onsite helping kaewa complete their census forms; and the Electoral Commission has been helping with the enrolment process for this year's election, giving kaewa the confidence to head to the polling booths."

The central city is an important place of connection for our kaewa. "Having a presence in town helps with social integration, and contributes to creating a stronger and more resilient community," says Jono.



# A tradition of compassionate care

*In 1895, a community of Anglican deaconesses was established in Christchurch to undertake parish work, to teach, and to care for the poor and the sick.*

In 1912, having grown in number, the community moved to a site in Barbardoes Street and became a religious order, the Community of the Sacred Name. From there, the Sisters continued their religious and social work for many years. In these post-quake days, the old convent no longer stands. But a Retreat House, which was built more recently, is still in place. The Sisters are now few in number and this year they decided to sell the site. The Mission saw an opportunity to create a social housing community there for kaewa (clients) of Housing First Ōtautahi who are experiencing homelessness.

“Current plans are for twenty homes to be built there, along with a building that can provide a communal space for gatherings, training workshops and other activities. This is an ideal



site for kaewa. It’s close to town, enabling ready access to services and public transport,” says CMM Executive Director Jill Hawkey. “It’s also close to the Housing First offices in Ferry Road.”

The Retreat House on the site will stay in place and will become offices for our Housing and Wellbeing teams. These teams are currently at CMM’s Matson’s Avenue site next to our Central Administration offices and Wesley Village. Moving the teams into town will release space to build more social housing, this time to extend Wesley Village which houses older people in affordable rental homes.

In September, CMM staff, including those who will work from the Retreat House, gathered with the Sisters for a liturgy of thanksgiving and to reflect on the history of the site. “We are excited to be continuing the kaupapa of the Sisters in the years to come,” says Jill.

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## Creating community through craft-making

*Earlier this year, Aratupu Preschool & Whānau Hub set up craft classes to engage parents and help them feel more at home within the Aratupu community.*

“A lot of these parents didn’t know a lot of people. They might have seen other people at drop-off but may not have engaged with them,” says Aratupu Whānau Support Worker Bridget Swan. “Some were nervous about using the whānau room but these days it is busy every Monday and Friday afternoon with up to six parents crafting before pick-up.”

A number of unexpected but pleasant outcomes have occurred. After a poi-making class, one parent with an aptitude for this

activity ran a class for others. Another had to pluck up the confidence to walk in the first day but a week later was teaching someone else to knit. A mother with English as a second language has since enrolled on a barista training course and often sends Bridget photos of her coffee creations.

“The group is really about making the parents feel more comfortable and knowing that we’re here for them, even if we don’t do it formally. We’re trying to help them make connections, to not be reliant on me, and to look for that independence. We want them to take ownership of Aratupu,” Bridget says.

Aratupu is looking for a sewing machine and people with craft skills. Please contact Bridget at [bridget.swan@mmsi.org.nz](mailto:bridget.swan@mmsi.org.nz), or dontate at [www.mmsi.org.nz/donate](http://www.mmsi.org.nz/donate)

# The stress has gone...

*CMM Financial Mentor and Incentive Saver programme designer Linda Smith notes that 39% of Kiwis don't have any emergency savings and that 20% could cover their living expenses for only a week or less if they lost their job.*

"Many people in New Zealand are struggling to manage their finances and normally have little or no savings for a rainy day," says Linda. "A lack of emergency funds leads to further financial difficulties and debt. This in turn results in increasing debt, loans being obtained through high interest lenders, KiwiSaver hardship applications, and insolvency procedures for many people."

Linda designed Incentive Saver to address this issue, offering a practical approach that starts people on their savings journey. Since the programme was launched, 20 savers have

completed the programme and there are 23 active savers with seven in the process of coming on board. "Initial results show that after six months 80% of those who completed the scheme are still saving regularly," says Linda.

Feedback from one participant sums up just how transformational the programme is: "The stress has gone—everything I need is covered now. I sleep better. It's definitely been a big change and I would recommend it to everybody. It should be compulsory!"

Linda says that despite its success, ongoing funding is a challenge and that this is the main constraint on expanding it as more participants would require additional facilitators.

You can empower CMM to continue delivering Incentive Saver by donating at [www.mmsi.org.nz/donate](http://www.mmsi.org.nz/donate).

## New Tautoko Hauora service

*Sometimes, going to the doctor can be challenging. There may be many reasons for this. Perhaps it's too expensive, or transport options are limited, or the pressure of work and family responsibilities are too great.*

For some people, a bad experience at one GP can lead them to distrust all GPs. For some from our refugee and migrant communities, having to explain a health issue in a language that's not their own is too daunting. And sometimes, fear of not being respected or accepted, as can be the case for those from LGBTQ+ communities, is a strong barrier to seeking healthcare.

Whatever the reason, it can help to have a knowledgeable support person walking alongside you to help navigate the system so that accessing medical help becomes less complex and more doable. This is the role of

three new kaitautoko (support workers) who have joined the Mission staff.

These positions are funded by Pegasus Health in a new Tautoko Hauora (Supporting Health) service. "Many of the people that our kaitautoko will be working with have lost trust in the health system," says CMM Executive Director Jill Hawkey. "The kaitautoko will help them resolve some of the barriers that have made healthcare inaccessible."

As well, because the kaitautoko are operating within the Mission, they will be able to draw on our different teams to help the people they are working with address the complex issues that have made their lives so difficult. "This support will mean that many people who have been shut out of the health system will be better able to look after themselves and their whānau," says Jill.



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