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## A Vaka is launched and a dream is realised

*"Koia toku rangatira, kare au e ngere  
God is my navigator I shall not fear."*

**A long held dream of Wesley Porirua's Youth Worker Donald Hunter was recently realised with the blessing and launching of Wesley's new bright yellow vaka, a fiberglass outrigger that will form an essential part of Wesley Community Action's Tu-a-nui Vaka Ama initiative.**

The idea grew from a voyage Donald made in 2001, under the guidance and mentoring of the late Sir Tom Davis, the vaka voyage took him from the island of Rarotonga to the outer islands of Aitutaki, Mauke, and Donald's home of Atiu.

For Donald the launching of the vaka is a positive youth development approach that is consistent with both kaupapa Maori and Polynesia, providing a process for Maori and Polynesian youth who are disconnected from their whanau, hapu and iwi, to reconnect with their whakapapa links.

As Donald explains, "Pacific culture, values and practices are very strong in New Zealand, however, most young Pacific people (58% of the total Pacific population in 1996) were born here. This means they need to develop their own identity amongst the often conflicting systems of two or more cultures. Many young Pacific people's social, spiritual, cultural and youth development activities centre around the church, or are not supported by any structure."

The objective of Tu-a-nui Vaka ama is to use the ancient knowledge and skills of Vaka navigation to promote healthy lifestyles and identity among



Polynesian youth in the Porirua Community. In Donald's characteristically modest way, he insists, "this is not about me, I am not the main instigator, this is really about our history and I am just one messenger of many."

Tu-a-nui Vaka ama is based on a strong philosophy of Vaka Protocol, which will teach and provide a solid foundation of Polynesian identity. The programme will use a holistic model of wellbeing that will include Kopu Tangata, Aiga, Whanaungatanga (families' concepts) in addition to teaching, Vaka ama language, history, physical activity, natural lore and nutrition.

Tu-a-nui Vaka ama components will be delivered in a way where participants have the opportunity to research tradition and history of ocean activity in the Pacific. The program will promote healthy lifestyles to widen under-

standing of identity from a Polynesian perspective. This includes;

- Polynesian navigation and migration.
- A Polynesian sense of identity – Tuakana/Teina relationship.
- Awareness of Polynesian health – Natural lore relating to voyaging.
- Water safety and first aid techniques.
- Team and leadership skills.

Donald hopes that the Tu-a-nui Vaka ama will be available for the many young people who work with the youthworkers at Wesley Porirua, and also cater for Pacific Islands Community Groups within the Porirua Community.

**Crucial funding for the Vaka project was gratefully received from the Mana Community Trust.**



Cover Pictures; ( Clockwise from above) Donald Hunter in a reflective moment. (Top) Sharing the Hongi (Right) Porirua Youth Group members sing a Waiata (Centre) Vaka one (used to accompany the bigger Vaka.)





## Going the Extra Mile

When Wesley Social Workers Anneke Beardsley and Ron Finau learned that James, (one of the young people in their care,) was excitedly preparing for a school ball, they planned on a novel treat for him.

After telling James that they would provide transport to the ball they arrived on the night to find young James looking more like James Bond. Suave, im-

maculately groomed in an impressive suit, James was waiting nervously for his 'lift'.

Thanks to Anneke and Ron the 'lift' was to be no ordinary 'lift'. James could hardly keep the smile from his face when he saw (and heard) that his transport was in fact a '72 Chrysler 2-door hardtop, kitted out with mag wheels and a pumping audio system complimenting the beat of the car's deep V8 rumble.

There was nothing subtle about this beast.

A CD of music that had been especially recorded for James by Ron and Anneke provided an additional audio treat and helped ensure that young James made the coolest (and loudest) entrance to the James Cook hotel - venue for the Ball.

## Te Whare Whakapakari Celebrates with Pride

**Pride – “pride.noun a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction due to something one owns, has done, achieved, etc...” (New Zealand Dictionary)**

**Wesley's Te Whare Whakapakari provides two homes for young people with a dedicated staff of 4 house parents supported by a team of 3 to 4 youth workers and counselors. As one of the longest running residential youth care programmes in New Zealand, and the only one offering all-day remedial care, Te Whare has a proud record of achievements and is a partnership between Wesley Community Action and Child Youth & Family. The following article was prepared by Wesley Youth Worker, Anny Freitas.**

It was with great pleasure that the staff of Te Whare Whakapakari were able to share and feel the satisfaction and achievements of our rangatahi/young people over the course of Term 2. As a small way of acknowledging our rangatahi's achievements we (staff) organised a 'Celebration' full of beautiful decorations, yummy kai and much more soul food that was to be shared over the course of the evening.

For the majority of our rangatahi/young people the goal of their time with us is to 'transition home'. However the typical middle class perception of the word 'Home' may be defined differently by some of the rangatahi that we work with. For some their 'ideal home' is defined as a 'secure

unit' or 'lock up' simply because prior to beginning their journey with Te Whare they had spent a long time in 'Secure' and for them it remained a 'strong, fond, safe place...where they didn't have to think too much and knew exactly what was expected from morning to night'.

Possibly as a result of these values and choices, the goal to return to their 'ideal home' was met half way through the term, (whether we agreed with their goal or not) and this client's behaviour was such that he was returned to his preferred 'secure' home.

For our remaining four rangatahi/young people who made it to the end of Term 2 there was a real sense of 'pride' felt in both whares (Tane and Wahine). Over the ten weeks (in true strengths-based fashion) our rangatahi's achievements were acknowledged publicly:

- All attended an overnight camp – tramping through the Orongorongo valley complete with new back-packs, rain-gear, kai etc and met with the challenge overcoming their own resistance and accepting support from their peers and staff.
- All attended 3 sessions of 'low-flying trapeze' @ Te Whaea facilitated by Valerie Claymore from the Wellington Circus group (aeroterra). This was definitely another challenge of physical ability and trust.
- One of our young tane obtain-

ing a part-time job with Dominos Pizza as well as gaining one years membership with Tawa Squash Club.

- After persistence and quiet determination another young tane made it into the Junior Basketball Team representing his College. He also supported his College Basketball Team to their first ever win after a series of severe losses prior to his inclusion in the team. We (TWW) would expect no less and we are very proud of our very own 'Michael Jordan' who had made the promise... "if I get in to the Basketball team... I'm gonna give up smoking... honest...Anny!"
- After many months of no contact with her Mum, our young wahine is now on her journey 'home with Mum' which was never a possibility prior to her journey with TWW. This young wahine acknowledged the work of TWW, in particular our Social Worker and Team Leader during the 'Celebration'.
- All our rangatahi are currently attending full-time education (whether mainstream or alternative).

So...as you can see we at Te Whare Whakapakari ('the house to strengthen, nurture and develop') have a lot to PROUD of. Our rangatahi continue to take on the essence of Te Whare Whakapakari and to meet ongoing challenges and hurdles. We look forward to the new Term with excitement and continued pride at the discovery of ongoing talents, skills and challenge.

**“After many months of no contact with her Mum, our young wahine is now on her journey ‘home with Mum’ which was never a possibility prior to her journey with Te Whare Whakapakari.”**



## The power of Words, the power of Choices

**Words speaking from deep within New Zealand's prisons have been successfully used to change antisocial behaviour in young people at Wesley Community Action's Te Whare Whakapakari, a residential home for young offenders.**

"Many of our young people are on the same negative spiral as the prisoners, and it can be very revealing for them to have a glimpse of what may lie ahead as told in the prisoners' own words," says Liz McMillan, Te Whare Team Leader.

"When a young person has suffered abuse and has resulting low self esteem issues it can often be incredibly comforting to them to find that they are not alone, they are not unique and that there are others out there who have suffered," says Liz. "Many of these prisoners have themselves been the victims of crime, many raped or abused, which in turn has often led to a spiral of self medication via drugs and alcohol with crime used to pay for the resulting addictions." The young people at Te Whare are often headed in the same direction, for the same reasons.

The words of the inmates have been sent in letters to Liz who has stored them in a huge much read book. Reading the prisoner's letters is not for the faint hearted, there are some very tough lives revealed. Yet there is also learning and there is hope.

Here is what one prisoner serving 9 years has to say, "coming to jail was the scariest thing I have ever had to go through....

it can take away your mana (pride) if you let it and you have to reach as deep as you can into your soul, take a long hard look at yourself, accept your guilt,

balance your wairua (spirit) and start to heal... and only then could I begin my journey of healing.... I could have had this same awakening, discovery and learning experience if I had listened to my whanau (family) .... (but) I thought I knew it all... it's taken sexual abuse; the loss of a child; physical, mental, verbal and physical abuse;... death of my family... and closest friends; alcohol, drugs.... all of this to make me what I have now become."

"I am locked in now, surrounded by photos of my loved ones, but I can not hold them and feel their heart beating, or see their first smiles in the morning, or kiss them good-night..."

Another prisoner serving 14 years (and "lucky I didn't get life,") has a much harsher view to the impact of an extended sentence in prison., "If (you chose) crime, then it is the ultimate castration."

'D' serving time for another persons crime has learned the hard way that gangs are not the answer for young people, "Running with the gangs, doing drugs, screwing anybody and trying to be tough ain't where it's at. I joined up with the gang at the age of 15 and since then I've been coming to jail. I thought by hurting people and f---ing the system and everybody else, I was being staunch – but all the time I was hurting myself and the people who really, truly loved me. In the gang they say "I love you bro' – but if your stuff up, you get the bash. Now ask yourself - is that love?"

Can you truly love someone who bashes you?

"When you get the (gang) patch you are still a bum boy... and if he (the 'Prez) says jump,

you do it.... living like that is not being yourself... you're a gangster... a bum boy to the patch... you are owned by the guys who run that ... gang."



Adding to the words from the prisons, Liz's book also records the journeys of self discovery made by many of the Te Whare residents. These stories often make enlightening reading. The resilience shown by the young people in the face of extreme hardship never ceases to amaze Liz and her staff.

This poem by a young resident of Te Whare sums up her feelings at the beginning of her journey ... "she's got the looks, she's got the clothes but what's inside no body knows. She's got the attitude, she's got the style. Something is hidden but she covers it with a smile. Her life is hell, no body cares, no one seems to see her tears. She's locked herself up and thrown away the key. No one will understand, no one will ever see... that the girl I am really talking about... is really me."

The words of another young person reflect a major realisation and turning point documented for others to share, "Each morning (when) I wake up I have two choices; I can choose to be in a good mood, or I can choose to be in a bad mood.... Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim, or I can choose to learn from it.... Life is about choice... It's your choice how you live your life."

The words may not be as clever as those of Charles Dickens or Shakespeare, but the words of those that have gone before often resonate and open the way to positive choices. The words housed in Liz McMillan's book of words and letters have proven to be powerful medicine.

"The words may not be as clever as those of Charles Dickens or Shakespeare, but the words of those that have gone before often resonate and open the way to positive choices. "





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## Strengths Based Conference

**5-7 November 2007.  
 Palmerston North.**

Wesley Community Action and Te Runanga O Raukawa Inc are proudly co-hosting the second New Zealand Strengths Based Conference, scheduled for 5 - 7 November at Palmerston North.

Strength Based practice represents a way of seeking, a way of thinking and a way of engaging with people. Since the first New Zealand conference in 2003 a movement has grown for whom this way of seeing, thinking and engaging has sparked meaning and value. The 2007 Conference asks 'is this the next frontier?'

Keynote speakers include; Whaturangi Winiata, Michael Durrant, Barry Duncan, Tania Thomas and David Hanna.

For further information;  
<http://www.fromstrength2strength.org.nz>



## Wesley joins NZ Sustainable Business Network

In a commitment to sustainability Wesley Community Action recently became a member of the NZ sustainable business network

The sustainable business network is an organisation devoted to ensuring that businesses and organisations such as Wesley Community Action meet the needs of today without adversely

impacting on the needs of tomorrow. The sustainable business network promotes 'environmentally sound' business practices such as; building efficiency, minimizing waste and maximising resources. The organisation promotes 5 simple steps towards sustainability as the first steps for an organisation to make;

a. Switching off lights and equipment

when not in use.

- b. 'Green' office stationery by reducing waste, recycling such things as envelopes and moving to recycled or non-bleached papers.
- c. Recycling all that we can
- d. Choosing 'greener' and environmentally friendly cleaning products
- e. Choosing energy efficient equipment and appliances.

## YES! I would like to make a Donation

I would like to make a donation of \$.....

Donations over \$5.00 are tax deductible. Please post this form to Wesley Community Action. PO Box 9332, Wellington.

- I would like to make a regular monthly donation of \$.....  Please send me a receipt
- I would like to make a "one-off" donation of \$.....

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*Thank you!*

