



Project Esther

“Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.”
 Mother Teresa

The Collective Voice of Three Supermarket Trolleys

Welcome to our Christmas newsletter 2022. The empty trolley was outside a house near our workplace, randomly placed on the unkept grass berm. It said something about not having means or transport to get groceries home.



The second trolley was parked beside the Margaret Mahy playground, it was filled with a woman's belongings and bedding. It was a sunny morning but the night had been very cold. It spoke of a hard life and homelessness.



The third trolley was copied from the Gloriavale Leavers' Facebook page. The photo showed a Pak'nSave shop for the women and their support team in court. These women have been voicing their employment enslavement and exploitation to the court. We are continuing to find out how this group has cost little or nothing to the Gloriavale leadership in terms of wages and time for their work done each day. Yet we are hearing how these women and their children have paid and overpaid a huge price with their hearts and flesh.



The trolleys collectively speak of circumstances and vulnerabilities that too many local Ōtautahi women and their families are forced to navigate. Of course, the trolleys do not have an actual voice, but they do have something to say to us. Women navigating adversity tell of their struggles to be heard and the reality of being last in line.

At Project Esther in 2022, we have seen an increasing number of women and their children ask us for accommodation to whom sadly, due to capacity we usually have to say “no.” Nationally, large numbers of women and children remain housed in motels waiting for safe, long-term accommodation.

More women, and our local schools too, are asking for the most basic of items like soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, and period products. We continue to provide these small but necessary items with great love.

Thank you for reading our Christmas newsletter. Our ancient Christmas story tells of good news being on the way, especially for those who are vulnerable. A big agenda for justice, mercy and kindness has been left in all of our collective hands. At Christmas we remember how a vulnerable Mother gave a voice to justice and mercy coming; and her child showed us how.

Meri Kirihimete to you and yours from all of us at Project Esther.

Daphne



House of Kindness Te Whare Atawhai

Words from a wāhine...*"I found this amazing Trust via Women's Refuge, when my 5-year old son and I had a family breakdown in the place we were living. I got offered this beautiful two-bedroom home that is fully-furnished. This has been amazing, as we were going into winter, and we were finding it hard to keep warm. It's nice to know that I don't need to stress about lawns or gardens, and if there is a problem with the property the team at Project Esther get on to it straight away. I also attend counselling, which is extremely helpful, their counsellor is amazing and very caring. At Project Esther they have two cool pods, one filled with heaps of women's clothes and kid's clothes, the other filled with manchester, cookery, and crockery. Thank you so much"*

want Aotearoa to be the first country in the world to achieve period equity by 2030, in line with the sustainable development goals from the UN."

It is a privilege to be working alongside this organisation while providing a needed benefit to our community at the same time.



Staff Training

Our wonderful staff continue to take the initiative to upskill and grow both personally and professionally. This year collectively we have studied: Te Reo level one, First Aid, The Enneagram, The Church and Treaty, Sexual Trauma and Cultural Safety, Self-Care, Inclusive Faith Communities and Disability access, and attended a Writer's Workshop.



Financial Harm

What is Financial harm?

"Behaviour that controls, restricts or removes a person's access to money, economic resources or participation in financial decisions." (goodshepherd.org.nz/economicharm)

This year we continue to see more women presenting to our service who are facing significant hardship due to economic harm. Whilst sometimes this is occurring within a current relationship, often women are still dealing with this long after the relationship has ended. Economic harm also crosses age and socio-economic boundaries. We will continue to journey with these women as we can and are grateful now for places like Good Shepherd who offer specific support in this area.



Story of Kindness

A woman who is a regular visitor to the Rawa Pods, contacted Project Esther asking if we could help with the school stationery costs for her child. The woman had recently had surgery and finances were tight. The stationery list was emailed through and one of our staff went about trying to purchase the goods online and have them delivered. This wasn't possible so our staff rang the store and explained what we were trying to do.

It was getting quite complicated and in the end, the person on the other end of the phone told us he was the Manager and he would be happy to donate what the family needed and deliver it to Project Esther himself.

We were so grateful for this generosity. He gave his details and only then we realised that this kind man was a relative of our staff member. Our world is small and is filled with many kind and generous people.



Winter Warmth for Women Project

Funding from **Helen Stewart Royle Charitable Trust** enabled our Winter Warmth for Women 2022 Project. We were able to purchase new puffer jackets, blankets and slipper socks, and help with power bills. Some women told us they did not use or turn on their heater if it was cold and they were home by themselves. They would wait until their children came home to turn it on or if they lived alone, they did not turn it on at all. The cost of using the heater was a barrier to keeping themselves warm.



Partnership with The Period Place

Following the Covid-19 lockdown last year, staff at Project Esther have seen a large increase in the number of people needing food and basic personal and sanitary items. Whilst we were able to provide food when needed, sourcing personal and sanitary items was proving challenging. We asked our community for help and received a large amount of these products, but we needed to find a more sustainable source.

Through extensive research, emails and meetings, we are now excited to be one of the first organisations in the South Island to be working alongside The Period Place as an Impact Partner to provide sanitary items, both disposable and reusable, to our community. Their vision: "We

The following are some of the words of thanks we received from some of the grateful women:

POWER BILLS

"I just want to say an extra thank you....I get to see the relief and gratefulness of what adding credit to a power bill creates. It is such a blessing to everyone and they are incredibly grateful"

"Fakaue lahi, thank you so much. Truly appreciate your help. Couldn't have come at a better time as some of us travelled for a funeral, the rest stayed at home so this will definitely help"

WINTER JACKETS

"Thank you very much for the gift of a jacket. It was such a lovely gift to receive as I could never afford a jacket like that. Much appreciated and thank you"

"Thank you for the opportunity to be given a brand-new jacket and being able to choose the colour and size that suits me. Because I walk everywhere it is keeping me warm this winter. Thanks so much."

Project Esther Trust greatly appreciates the generosity of the Estate of Helen Stewart Royle Charitable Trust. This grant has allowed us to make a difference in the lives of these women in our community.

Music and Movement 2022

Music and Movement had a disruptive start to the year with different Covid levels and restrictions preventing gatherings but these led to creative ways of connecting. We've been

so blessed to have Renée Gardiner leading the sessions this year and she started in Term 1 by posting sessions online when we were unable to meet physically.

From Term 2 on, it has been back to on-site movement once more and the families have returned with high spirits - and even more energy - as they sing and dance the time away. Renée has increased our embrace of te reo Māori as well as adding many other touches of creativity intertwined with learning. The families have loved her input and she has fascinated the children with her joy and sessions. We have also been grateful to have the Living Room Café reopen and Larry's kai and coffee are wonderful ingredients for more connection and catch-ups after the music sessions. Thank you Renée for all the love and effort that you bring each week and for your genuine concern for the children and their whānau. Thanks also to Margot who stepped in and covered for Renée and for the volunteers who continue to show up each week.

Support that keeps giving

"In 2015 I was very blessed to be supported by Project Esther ministries through what was the most difficult time of my life. I lost everything, and had to start over from scratch. The lovely ladies there supported me with coffee, a trip to the coast, listening ears and much prayer.

I am now a community nurse and I work every day with the hope I can give back to others as well. Recently the team I work with have seen some mothers going through some challenging times. I reached out to Project Esther ministries for support

with toiletries for some of the ladies we look after. Those that have received these have been so thankful for this generosity. It is lovely to brighten up mothers' lives and let them know they are cared about.

Many thanks again for all your support."

Over the last 12 Months Project Esther has:

- subsidised 105 counselling sessions for women
- assisted with 86 counselling sessions for children
- had 350 visits by women to the Rawa Pods
- paid for 3 driving lessons
- provided more than 100 wāhine and rangatahi with personal care packs
- paid 37 power bills
- provided 12 warm jackets
- provided housing for 16 people
- distributed 500 covid tests
- given out 12 warm blankets
- handed out 1200 packets of sanitary pads
- Assisted with the purchase of 4 mobility cards
- packed 100 Christmas Care packs for Women in Prison



Letter from local School Principal

To whom it may concern,

It is always a privilege to endorse the work of Project Esther.

Sometimes when I look at the flood of need coming at us each day, it is tempting to be overwhelmed and to do nothing. Sadly, that's what seems to happen for many of our families when they approach organisations for help and are told that they are just one of many.

This past year we have called on Project Esther to help with counselling, therapy, gift packs, safe houses, guidance, domestic violence and Mums heading for incarceration. Hidden amongst the numbers and voices, are miserable and vulnerable women and children who feel unloved and invisible.

It is hard to describe the joy on the faces of those invisible people when they realise that someone cares about them and is prepared to listen and help.

Maintaining the mana and dignity of wounded and vulnerable people, who need help, is work that requires expertise, insight and wisdom. Project Esther navigates all of the barriers and brings hope.

Some of our pre-teen girls have received care packages and can't believe the luxury of having things that we all take for granted like shampoo, deodorant, PJs and a toothbrush. Project Esther is a key support in our school and their work is often unseen and unsung. I'm singing loudly, "Project Esther".

Your sincerely
Tamaki/Principal

We are grateful to have had the opportunity to work alongside and connect with the the following organisations and groups this year:

Addington Te Kura Taumatua/ Addington
School

Battered Women's Trust
Christchurch Aunties

Christchurch Women's Prison

Cross Over Trust

Good Shepherd NZ

Health and Disability Advocacy Service

He Kete Oranga o te Mana Wahine

Kingdom Resources Trust

The Loft - Ki te Tihi

Martin Visser - Clinical Psychologist

Naomi McLean Counselling

Ohu Arataki

Pathway Trust

The Period Place

Pete Majendie - Pastoral Artist

Rowley Resource Centre

Shakti

St. Martins Life Group SWBC

Te Ara Koropiko/ West Spreydon School

Te Kura Tuarua o Horomaka/ Hillmorton High School

Te Puawaitanga ki Ōtautahi Trust

Te Whare Rama Early Learning Centre

Visionwest Community Housing

West Christchurch Women's Refuge

Zonta

As always, we are incredibly grateful to all our Funders and Supporters.
We could not do any of this without you all.