



WELCOME TO OUR 2020 CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER

This year we have enjoyed remembering and celebrating Project Esther Trust being 25 years old.

In pondering what we are most grateful for we felt it was around 'being trusted'.

The Cambridge dictionary says trust means "to believe that someone is good and honest and will not harm you, or that something is safe and reliable".

In so many respects we have been honoured with trust. Women come and trust us with their vulnerable circumstances and stories. Doctors, counsellors, corrections staff, school teachers, social workers, preschools, churches, neighbours and friends trust us and refer women to us who are facing adversity. Funders and donors trust us with their money.

We are moved that we have been given the privilege of being invited into the journeys of many women who had their personal trust challenged or betrayed.

Over the years our intention has been that we are found trustworthy and that our responses express kindness and enable hope.

Our supporters are important and have encouraged us in so many ways as we connect in the women's prison, music and movement, our WōW group, our accommodation, drop in and office space. If you are passing by do pop in, our jug is usually on Monday to Thursday 9.30am to 2.30pm.

As we approach this season of Christmas may we be inspired to express and receive trust and love in life giving ways.

Daphne



Project Esther

VISION

Women are valued, respected and reaching their full potential.

MISSION

Women's lives changing: Changing attitudes about women:

VALUES

Care, respect and kindness underpins all our relationships.

We are clear about what we offer and connect with others to ensure women get the best support.

Flexible and Responsive – listening to women and offering options for practical and emotional support.

Journeying alongside women who are navigating difficult life circumstances.





It is with joy we now have our new Rawa (provision) pods open.



Ainslie



Activity and card packs for women at CWP



Naomi

HOUSE OF KINDNESS | TE WHARE ATAWHAI

It's wonderful to be part of a new beginning:

"During lockdown I became a tenant with PE. I needed accommodation and support as my living situation was not good for me or my child. Having a safe and peaceful place to be has given me space to get my sanity back and motivated me to go where I wanted to be. I have just moved into my own new place; I am so relieved to have my own place that I can call home for me and my child. I am on a new path."

"Moving into the house was a chance to relax. It gave me a chance to take a breath and not worry."

REFUGE

I have been supporting a young immigrant in our city as a Project Esther volunteer. We have been shopping together for clothes, glasses, groceries, and we have got her enrolled at the library. I have enjoyed getting to know her, and learning about her culture and home village. I have also seen her small child grow in confidence. We went to a mall playground, and I especially like visiting the neighbourhood kindergarten, and meeting its local children and teachers.

Ainslie

EDUCATION

We are so excited that our Elane McKenzie Education Fund makes it possible to gift this new laptop to a woman facing challenges (and a busy Mum) for her study.

For those who didn't know her, Elane really cared about women reaching their potential. At her funeral a few years ago Project Esther was her nominated charity to receive donations from her friends and family.

"Hello I am from another country and I got laptop from your organization. I want to thank you so much to help to got, because I am studying in Ara and I was really need it to my study. I have important presentation to do it, but the lockdown make it hard to get one, and your support to me I appreciate to you to make this happen. I don't know really what to say - me and my family very thankful to you."

CHRISTCHURCH WOMEN'S PRISON

During the Level 4, 3 and 2 lockdowns this year Project Esther has sent over 140 isolation packs of card making materials to the women at CWP. We also sent 20 activity packs (word find/

colouring in) for women who need to be in isolation during this time.

On behalf of the prisoners, CWP staff, as Chaplains we want to say a big thank you to the Project Esther team for going the extra mile over the past 2 months to provide craft packs for those in quarantine and other units. An excerpt from a note from a grateful recipient reads: 'words can't express what that meant ... now I could do something for my kids ... the feel of that is special and because of you I could.'

COUNSELLING

Kia ora e te whānau, I hope this newsletter finds you well. It has been a privilege to join the wonderful women at Project Esther this term, offering counselling to women who are facing difficulty. I often reflect on how much it can mean to have someone alongside us as we process life's challenges. Courage and strength are so often found through simply knowing we are not alone. As we go into the holidays, and especially after this very challenging year, I encourage you to value and take care of yourself, as so often we lose sight of our own needs while taking care of everyone else. May you find time to slow down and relax, and reconnect with what is most important to you.

Turou hawaiki – blessings be upon you.

Naomi. BCouns, BTchLn

COVID-19 & WĀHINE IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

The Coronavirus pandemic of 2020 has hit women hard in terms of job losses, gender-based violence, and anxiety.

The recession caused by the pandemic has been dubbed a 'Shecession' because unlike recessions of the past, which affected industries dominated by male workers, COVID-19 has hit the service industries which are dominated by female workers who are often part-time.

Statistics released in August suggest that 10,000 of the 11,000 Kiwis who lost their jobs during lockdown in New Zealand were women. These figures and the government economic stimulus response (the 'shovel-ready' infrastructure projects) have Kiwibank economists and groups like the National Council of Women concerned that women will be left behind as male dominated industries are given priority despite the job losses being overwhelmingly in female dominated sectors.

The inequities of the government response has highlighted the

lack of a 'gender lens' in government policy making processes, suggesting that gender equality is considered a luxury rather than a priority to policy makers.

In a bid to address the inequities in the government response, the Minister for Women has stated that trades need to be made more attractive to women. However, there is concern the government's push to encourage women into male dominated trades, so women can benefit from the government stimulus package, will not be effective due largely to the sexism that still exists in these industries. If government want women in trades there need to be some requirements from contractors to have a gender equality plan that they actively implement. It has also been suggested that it could be more effective, and beneficial to the community, to finance women into mental health apprenticeships and other social infrastructures like health, caring, counselling, and education. The Minister for Women has also stressed the importance of acknowledging the productive benefit of the unpaid work women do, which increased disproportionately during lockdown, in order to balance the inequities in the government response.

A survey, carried out by the Unisys Security Index, showed that the pandemic caused women significantly more stress than men. The stability of the NZ health infrastructure, the nation's economic stability, as well as family health and financial security were the main causes of stress. USI believes the negative statistics were a reflection of women's personal experience given their over-representation in frontline occupations such as health care.

The lockdown also sparked a sharp increase in domestic violence against women and children, both here and overseas. Women's refuges and police recorded significant spikes in women reporting incidents and seeking help as victims were isolated from their normal social networks and outlets, such as work and school. Victims became more vulnerable as lockdown conditions forced them to be in the presence of their abusers for extended periods of time with little hope of relief.

Sadly, although the government did release a \$2 million Community Fund for Women and Girls, which was offered to organisations supporting women to improve the wellbeing of women and children in New Zealand, this does not address the need for paid employment for women or the systemic inequities that have left women most affected and least resourced in the response to the pandemic.

Researched and written by *Liz and Leanne*

MUSIC & MOVEMENT

While we missed all our families during lockdown, many made use of a new Facebook page. Linda created regular little clips with favourite songs, mostly recorded in her garden. Welcome to all the new families this term.

WAIORA Ō TE WAHINE WŌW – WELLBEING OF WOMEN

Thanks to Zoom our WōW group has been able to continue to meet regularly and support each other while staying in our own bubbles.

The power of a Social Worker and warming Christine's house.
"Haley asked me about my health and my son's health and she said we had reasons for getting help from Housing NZ with our house. The house is so very cold and I only put the fire on around 3 o'clock when school is finishing, but the fire doesn't actually do anything."

I got a phone call and a lady came and did an assessment. She went all around the house and felt how cold it was. The windows had big gaps where the wind came in. I've been in the house 14 years and had called HNZ myself but never got anywhere. The lady said, "We'll get some workmen round to put in heat pumps and heaters and fix the holes."

Because of my son's health we got put up the list and looked at. There's now a heat pump in my bedroom and in the lounge and heaters in the children's rooms. The gaps in the window frames are fixed.

It's so different now. It feels so nice and comfortable. I just need help to know how to work the remote thing as the man only showed me how to turn it off and on. It's set on 22 degrees."



Pete Majendie with his Ephemeral art



Christine



Linda



A day out among the daffodils



Meeting with the lovely staff from Shakti



OUR LOCAL MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

I just want to take the time to recognise the great work that you do with young mothers in the community. My office connected a young Mum with your team recently for support, and I have been just so delighted to hear from her that your staff and volunteers have really wrapped such a great service around her, from taking her to shop for clothing for the family, to getting an eye test and a quote for glasses, to supplying essential items like a pushchair, baby car seat and regular food parcels. The breadth of your service and the care in which it is delivered is outstanding.

Megan Woods

SOME OTHER MEMORABLE MOMENTS

- Meeting with the lovely staff from Shakti (Ethnic Women's Support) about our temporary, emergency accommodation. Shakti means strength, we are all for that!
- Visiting and doing fun craft activities at He Kete, a beautiful therapeutic community focused on women with alcohol and other drug dependencies.
- Pete Majendie visited our staff team with his Ephemeral art (lasting for a very short time). He reminded us: "Our stories continue." "Our conversations remain." "Things unsaid can be missed opportunities."
- National Volunteer Week. We have the best volunteers!
- We received a load of the most gorgeous knitted children's hats and lovely masks to share with our families

Thanks for taking the time to read our 2020 newsletter. As you look towards journeying in 2021...
 "May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears."

Nelson Mandela



PROJECT ESTHER STAFF

Liz, Karen, Rebecca, Daphne, Linda, Cherie, Haley.



PROJECT ESTHER TRUSTEES

Grant Chivers, Fiona Wells, Marianne Lewis (Chair) Dr Bronwyn Graham, Daphne Marsden, Jackie Bunting, Karen Pennington and Alistair Tennent.

WE WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THOSE WHO HAVE MADE IT FINANCIALLY POSSIBLE TO CONTINUE DOING THE WORK WE DO

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