

A Matter of Trust – Huakina Development Trust, working at the grassroots

Franklin “fell through the net..”

The statistics on Maori health in Franklin are shocking – seven out of 10 families surveyed have children suffering from type two diabetes. Five family members under 25 had gout, while the levels in the community of arthritis, obesity and heart disease are alarming. The mission statement for Pukekohe based Huakina Development Trust is “Unleashing the Potential of the People.” Their work is ALL about people, as they work to reverse this trend back to wellbeing, centred around a traditional, marae based way of life.

The figures enable the independently funded Trust to bring on board Government agencies and social service providers to help them bridge a gap that has existed for many years in Franklin, where predominately Maori families “fell through the net”. Existing systems to help people had bypassed Franklin. Those based in Waikato and Auckland both thought Franklin was under the other – Huakina Development Trust was formed to fill the void.

Wanda Kiel-Rapana is a caregiver and one of those who have seen the ‘real’ stories in our community. One of her areas has been working at a residential home for young people at Glenbrook.

“While we deal mainly with Maori, our services are not exclusive, but open to all in the community,” she explains. “We experience a lot of extremes and the issues people are struggling to come to terms with, like unemployment and poor housing. Low income is the basic cause of most problems. This affects the quality of food they can buy – which affects their health. It limits their life choices. For too many families, it’s about finding the strength to survive any way they can. We deal with the surface parts of some really deep issues and are lucky to be staffed by people who are familiar with what is happening and know how to help.

“Where someone like the police can’t get a foot in the door, we have inside information. When 8-12 year olds are roaming the streets at 2 in the morning, we know the parents will either be partying, not home, or don’t have the trust of their kids – so they go and please themselves. Sometimes, in the early stages, parents have tried to discipline, threatening hidings when they get home, but kids are quite resilient and parents give up. Then there are the kids who are not safe at home. By the time they are 14-15, they perpetuate the negative ‘role models’ set by their parents.

“Youth problems are a global thing, but follow the same patterns – low income, no quality of life and dislocation from traditional patterns. Kids don’t know where they come from. It’s all about loss. But Maori are now realising the importance

of education and that they can teach themselves a few things in order to compete. The greatest is to know how Maori lived pre-European, and the basic principles that can still be used today.”



**Congratulations to All
Who Make a Difference in Franklin**