

# URGENT CHRISTMAS APPEAL FOR CCC

“People Are Still Hungry On Holidays...”



A little girl enjoys play with Jill in the children's playroom



Erin, Rokati and Rangī were founding members of CCC.



Sarah-Jane always has a warm welcome for new clients

It's Monday at Christian Community Care at 60 Kayes Road, Pukekohe and the place is a hive of activity. Delicious smells are wafting from the kitchen where cooks in blue aprons and white hairnets are preparing a hot lunch with fresh salads. Hands are busy in the storerooms too, packing vegetables in bags, eggs, bread, tins and packets of food in boxes. In the chiller a team are sorting out yogurt, butter and cheese. Next to the office, Tania is cutting a young man's hair. Clothing is piled on a table for people to find what they need. Donated furniture is also available. Director Erin Fleming is a whirlwind as she moves through the rooms, answering questions, chatting to people,

asking if everyone is alright. In the office Sarah-Jane sits with a woman clutching a small knitted teddy bear. The client's head is bowed and her shoulders sag. The unexpected gift of the teddy bear has sent a stream of tears down her cheeks. She is far from the first – and will certainly not be the last person who arrives at CCC in despair, to a gentle, warm welcome, to a safe place to start to mend, to cope. Lunch is served for the volunteers before people arrive from the neighbourhood, from around Franklin, from as far away as Mercer. No one knows how many will turn up to eat and receive desperately needed food parcels, but there is always enough to go around. “Our needs are always met,” says Erin. The children sit on small chairs at a table of their own or share a plate with their mother, father or nan. Lily starts to strum her guitar and her strong, clear voice fills the room. Two more guitars join in and as people eat, the simple dining hall is suddenly the sweetest place on earth.

“When Labour was in power, Auntie Helen sent us a letter saying we could shut down now...that everyone will be taken care of. I filed the letter,” says Erin, gesturing toward the rubbish tin in the corner.

Erin knows only too well that there is always a need for people to receive a help-

ing hand, a free communal meal and a parcel of food, friendship - somewhere welcoming and non-judgemental. She knows that there are always those who won't be looked after by government agencies. Volunteers from CCC are available every day, seven days a week, including long weekends, amounting to hundreds of hours. “People are still hungry on holidays,” Erin says simply. The only break taken by volunteers is over Christmas. Despite Helen's optimism, the need for a helping hand has not gone. Instead, it has increased dramatically.

Erin: “We have had a huge demand on our resources since the recession and we desperately need more tinned food and chickens for our Christmas food parcels. We also need monetary donations because we have our own running costs and we also operate our ‘D’ Fund, a small reserve of money which we use to assist people when there is an urgent financial need. We even need plastic shopping bags, to parcel up vegetables. We use 80 a week! All over our community there are people hurting, for example, people who do not meet the criteria to receive ACC support or people who have lost their jobs and still have to pay the mortgage and feed their kids. Most of the people who come in here say ‘this is the last place I thought I'd ever be.’ They are



Everyone needs a haircut sometime... Tania at work