



SPRING 2013 + For donors, staff, volunteers and other supporters of Family Works

A boy and his horse



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Sometimes vulnerable families just need extra encouragement in the everyday challenges they face. Support like yours means our family workers can identify issues before they escalate and help families access the services they need.

Taupo Family Worker Gabby Strichen, for instance, has been a great advocate for one little boy, his dad and his school.

At age 7, Stephen is a happy, talkative boy

but his rough play and angry outbursts disturb other children, and he sometimes runs away.

He lives with his dad, Terry, who finds it difficult to manage on his own. Stephen's school has also found it hard to put in place the intensive support he requires.

Gabby referred the family to Strengthening Families, which coordinates the input of multiple agencies and works out a plan to meet the family's needs. Terry attended two 'Incredible Years' parenting programmes and the Mana Tane Men's Group, where he enjoyed talking with other parents and learnt

some new skills.

Gabby also arranged for Stephen to go to 'Riding for Development', a horse riding programme designed to increase confidence and coordination in children like him. He loves the horses, and talks non-stop as they ride for an hour every week.

"We're slowly getting there", says Terry. "Gabby has made a big difference – just having someone to talk to is great."

"Just having someone to talk to is great."

Back from the brink

Melissa* is a 16-year-old who had been brought up by her mother. She had suicidal thoughts which led her to harm herself regularly. Her mother struggled with anxiety, depression, drug use, and historical abuse.

When she was referred to Family Works for counselling, Melissa revealed that her mother was physically abusing her and her older sister was also self-harming. Added to this, a friend had committed suicide on Melissa's birthday.

With help from the counsellor, Melissa

and her mother agreed on a safety plan and some positive goals for their relationship. After several weeks, Melissa wrote her mother a letter about her values and strengths. She learnt how to manage her anger and the triggers that led to self-harm.

Melissa used to think about suicide every day, but not any more. Instead of hurting herself, she now has positive ways to deal with her painful emotions.

Family Works has been like a 'guardian angel' for Melissa. Her counsellor has been able to bring her back from the brink of self-destruction, thanks to the support of people like you.

* Not her real name.

It's OK to help

As a Guardian Angel supporter, you are already making a difference for those affected by family violence and abuse. Here are some other ways to help:

- Don't make excuses for violence
- Take action if something is wrong
- Don't be afraid to ask questions, e.g. Are you OK? Is someone hurting you?
- Tell the victim that violence is not their fault
- Offer practical support

The sooner you reach out to someone who is living with violence, whether they are the victim or the perpetrator, the sooner they can get help.

Raising voices, not fists

Teenagers from the Eastern Bay of Plenty raised their voices instead of their fists in a song quest with an anti-violence message.

The "Yeah, Nah – It's Not OK" contest encouraged local musicians aged 13 to 17 to write and perform an original song about how violence affects them, whether through bullying, family violence or abuse. Businesses and local agencies, including Family Works, lent their support for the community event.

First prize went to Manawa Toa from Murupara (lead singer pictured right) with their unique synthesised song *Take This Away*. In second place was solo act Conall Aird, a Year 13 student from Trident High School in Whakatane with his song *She Rose*. Third prize went to soloist 15-year-old Jess, otherwise known as Ducky, from Te Apiti Hou in Whakatane, with *No More Pain*.

The top prize package includes eight hours studio time to record the song, which will be used by the 'It's not OK' Campaign



and broadcast throughout the Eastern Bay of Plenty, plus a rafting trip for the band and \$1000 cash for their school.

The contest was organised by the local family violence network in partnership with Family Works and the national 'It's not OK' campaign.

At Family Works, we recognise that to effect change in family violence statistics, we need to also raise awareness of the 'It's Not OK' message in our young people. This song quest helped give young people a voice about how family violence impacts their lives.



Sunshine and smiles instead of fear

Family Works' partnership with Shine is making a real difference for families experiencing violence. Thanks to the support of Guardian Angels like you, people like Margie* have a much brighter future.

Margie already had two children when she married a much older man, a recovering alcoholic like herself. He was psychologically abusive and after a few years, family life became intolerable. Margie's hair fell out, she cried all the time, her 7-year-old son constantly wet his bed and her 10-year-old daughter became withdrawn.

With no will left to live, Margie attempted suicide through a

drug overdose. The hospital referred her to Shine, and Family Works' social worker and counsellor Caroline Cottrell started working alongside her.

Caroline talked with Margie about her goals, and what she liked about herself. Margie found it helpful to draw the kind of life she really wanted, surrounded by sunshine and smiles instead of fear.

Her husband made some changes too, with the help of counselling, and their marriage improved. Some weeks later, Margie told Caroline that "life is terrific." Her hair has stopped falling out, her son's bedwetting habit has stopped and both children have received very positive school reports.

"Life is terrific now."

* Not her real name.

Safer homes for children

Social workers are helping create safer homes for young children in targeted areas of East and South Auckland.

In partnership with Plunket nurses and health workers, Family Works social workers provide valuable support for otherwise hard-to-reach families.

The most common reason for referral is inadequate or overcrowded housing. Other challenges include low income, single parenthood, involvement with Child Youth and Family (CYF), and the risk of abuse.

By intervening early in a child's life, social workers can relieve pressure on parents and create a more stable and healthy home environment for children.

Alanoy (pictured) appreciated the support of social worker Christine Morey-Bollard. With four children including a baby to care for, Alanoy was worried about finances and felt unable to give her eldest boy the attention he needed. Christine's practical support enabled her to feel



more confident and hopeful about her family's future.

Another mother was trying to reunite her son and husband with the family. The social worker liaised with CYF and supported her through the process. "At that time I was so scared about what happened to my family, my husband and my son... Now everything is OK and my family is back together and I'm so happy," she said.

"My family is back together and I'm so happy."

Angel news

Family Works in the front line

Child abuse and family violence continue to make the headlines but, thanks to Guardian Angels like you, Family Works is able to deliver frontline services in areas with the highest need.

We have qualified, professional staff delivering services in all ten areas with the highest reported child abuse, according to recently released figures from Child Youth and Family.

Our counsellors and social workers provide services to more than 6,628 children each year (18 children every day). In communities from Taupo northward, we work closely with the Police, the Ministry of Education and CYF. We also provide more than 60 social workers in nearly 130 primary and secondary schools throughout the region.

These social workers are at the grassroots, working alongside teachers to identify issues before they escalate. Early intervention also drives our partnership with Plunket, which provides integrated support for vulnerable families in South and East Auckland.

Every day, we see families responding positively to the support and encouragement Family Works offers.

“You helped us put plans in place to keep us safer.”

“I feel like I’ve gone to hell and back, but your family workers helped me through this time.”

“I feel much empowered after my sessions at Family Works. I feel very safe and respected.”

“I used to feel lost and my problems weighed upon my shoulders but now my family is happier and stronger, thanks to your positive and caring services.”



We’re sharing this feedback with you because you’re part of our team too! **Thank you for ‘being there’ with us for those who need it most.**



Guardian Angels make a difference

Your support makes a real difference for vulnerable families and those who are living in the shadow of violence. If you know someone else who may wish to become a Guardian Angel, or to contact us, here are the details:

Family Works Northern

**www.northern.familyworks.org.nz & www.facebook.com/familyworksnorthern
& www.angel.org.nz or Phone 09 520 8600 (ask for Supporter Relations).**

Angel
news