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Community Connect

AUTUMN
2016

THE BEST START IN LIFE

Family life can be a challenge, and having a baby and bringing them up is a difficult job at the best of times.

For some of us this can be harder because of our own personal difficulties and problems or our family/whānau situation. It is at these times that getting help can be really important.

In this Autumn edition of Community Connect we will focus on the biggest programme we run at Anglican Family Care, Family Start. Last year our Family Start team worked with 333 babies and our family/whānau workers made over 10,000 home visits.

Family Start is an intensive home visiting programme delivering the Ahuru Mōwai and Born to Learn curriculum that focuses on improving children's growth and health, learning and relationships, family circumstances, environment and safety. It helps families/whānau who are struggling with challenges or problems that may make it harder for them to care for their baby or young child. Ahuru Mōwai and Born to Learn also contains Te Mahere Kaupapa Māori, which provides

additional ideas and activities of particular relevance to whānau Māori.

We can start the programme any time from when the mother is three months pregnant until the child's first birthday and can work with the mother and child up until the child's fifth birthday if needed. Our average length of intervention with one child is approximately three years.

A key idea for our family/whānau workers is that in a "child centred" service such as Family Start, the child needs to be central to service delivery. This means that while a family may have many issues, the needs of the child for warm, responsive care and appropriate stimulation cannot wait for crises to pass. The needs of children and how parents are meeting them are a core focus of Family Start.

The results we see from participants in the Family Start programme are amazing. One mother recently saying "My relationship with my baby is stronger and I have gained confidence as a mum" and another mother saying "I now have more confidence in my ability to be a parent and now I'm on the right track".

For \$30 per month you can help support the journey of one baby through the successful Family Start programme. If this sounds like something you would like to support, please visit our website www.anglicanfamilycare.org.nz and pledge a donation today or fill in a coupon on page 8.

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beating the odds

Jess is a confident young Mum who's proud of her hard work and accomplishments. She's come a long way on a difficult road but now has a strong and positive outlook of her future.

Although Jess became pregnant at the age of 15, she has found support through Anglican Family Care's Family Start Programme. She credits her success to the support she found through Anglican Family Care's, Family Start Programme.

When Jess discovered she was pregnant, she and her partner (aged 14) decided to relocate to Dunedin. They moved in with her partner's sister but it wasn't long before Jess realised they were not in a good environment. "When we moved to Dunedin, I had no support," says Jess. "WINZ turned me onto Family Start and that's where I met Cathy. I instantly trusted her and she's been with me from the beginning."

Jess didn't have a car or transport at that time which meant she had to walk to her appointments from St. Kilda. She was relieved to discover that Cathy provided home visits. "It was really good that Cathy came to us," Jess recalls. "It made life so much easier."

The Family Start Programme focuses on improving children's lives. Parents can join the programme during pregnancy, like Jess, or after their child is born, up to the age of 16. The focus is long-term and social workers are able to work with a family for up to five years. The goal of the programme is to help those who are struggling with challenges or problems which make it harder to care for their baby or young child.

Jess feels the programme helped her immensely. "There's no way I'd be where I am without Family Start or Cathy. They've helped me in so many ways." As a young Mum, Jess found some aspects of parenting quite challenging. Her son struggled with proper sleeping habits and consequently it

affected his behaviour. "I remember one time he was having a temper tantrum on the floor and I was in tears about it. I just wanted to walk out. It was the most horrible feeling. But Cathy provided me with ideas on how to deal with it and that was really helpful."

Besides meeting with families in their homes, workers of the Family Start programme also accompany clients to doctor and other social service appointments. "Cathy took me to Restore when we needed furniture for our house and she also went with me to WINZ. Because I was young I feel it was good to have Cathy with me as a support. I wasn't scared about going because of her. She has fantastic knowledge and I couldn't have done it without her," recalls Jess.

Jess participated in the Family Start programme for four years. During that time she and Cathy were able to identify and work on issues and problems that were adversely affecting her life as well as the life of her son. "It took a long time to admit and identify that I struggled with depression. Without Cathy's help, I would have spiralled down and not sought help. Counselling was one of the biggest things she wanted me to do."

New Zealand statistics show that young mothers are less likely to be in education or employment.*

But Jess has beaten the odds. With hard work and determination, she has earned her NCEA Level III certificate and is currently employed. She also teaches dance and competes nationally. Jess sees herself as motivated and contributes her success to the support she received from Cathy. "She helped build my confidence," says Jess. "Cathy helped keep me sane. She knew my headspace and always had a way of making me feel better. She made me not feel ashamed."

It's obvious that Jess and Cathy have built a strong and trusting relationship. Jess is happy for her success today but also broken-hearted to be exiting the programme. "It was sad to say goodbye. Cathy is the most steady person I've had in my life. She was always there for me. My son had such a good relationship with her too. She would bring him toys and he would always get excited to see her. He keeps asking when she's coming next."

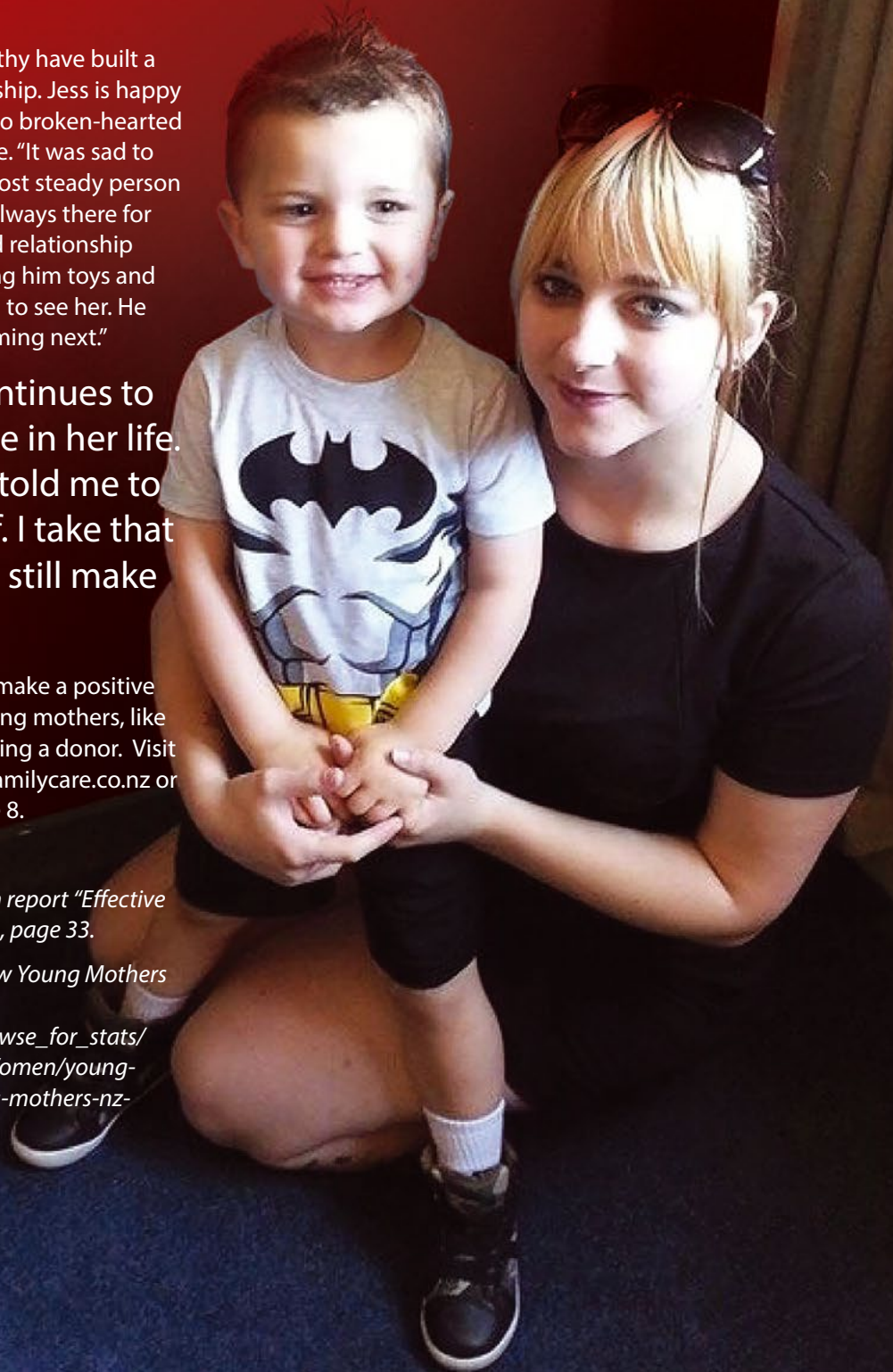
In the end, Jess continues to carry Cathy's advice in her life. "Cathy has always told me to take care of myself. I take that on board now and still make time for me."

For \$30 per month you can make a positive difference in the lives of young mothers, like Jess, please consider becoming a donor. Visit our website www.anglicanfamilycare.co.nz or complete a coupon on page 8.

**Family Commission research report "Effective Parenting Programmes" 2014, page 33.*

***Statistics New Zealand, "Few Young Mothers are Engaging in Education".*

http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/people_and_communities/Women/young-mothers-nz-workforce/young-mothers-nz-media-release.aspx



a head start on life

“You’ve got to stay positive or you’ll end up in a deep dark hole”

Nick was born in Christchurch at 24 weeks and weighed 690 grams, the equivalent weight of 3 cups of flour. Nick was in the Neonatal Intensive-Care Unit (NICU) for 122 days. Alesha wasn’t able to touch her son for over a month and had her first cuddle on Mother’s day 2014. After his first cuddle with mum, the hospital staff noticed Nick’s health had improved.

The loving attachment between a mother and her baby affects brain development. Because the brain is so changeable during early childhood, negative experiences or the absence of appropriate stimulation can have serious and sustained effects. A mother can influence a baby’s brain development and she is one of the most important sources of a baby’s brain stimulation.

Attachment and brain development are just a small part of what our Family/Whanau workers teach parents with the Ahuru Mōwai/Born to Learn Curriculum in the Family Start programme.

The curriculum contains well researched information for sharing with parents about brain development, child development and learning, parenting issues, play ideas and extra information on child focussed topics. The curriculum is organised into sections according to the child’s age and contains ideas about development together with play ideas for parents which will enhance development.

Nick was five months old when Alesha and her partner decided to relocate to Dunedin to be closer to family, and because his immune system was so low, he had to be flown down to the Neonatal Intensive-Care Unit (NICU) at Dunedin Hospital.

Nick going home for the first time.



Alesha bonding with her son.



Nick - Day One.



Pania Tulia, worker and Alesha.

Nick 9 months old



Nick's first birthday.



Vibrant, happy boy.



Nick today.



It was the staff at Dunedin Hospital who offered Alesha a referral to the Family Start programme as they had noticed she had few support systems around her.

Hospital staff also had concerns around how the couple would manage with Nick and his medical needs, as young first time parents. Alesha and Nick were assigned to Family/Whanau worker Pania. "Pania didn't judge us and really listened to what was going on in our lives" said Alesha "She also provided me reassurance that what I was doing as a mum was ok".

Nick had been in and out of hospital for heart surgery, chronic lung disease, low immune system and a host of other ailments. On top of this, Alesha's partner was made redundant and soon after suffered a seizure and blacked out. Overnight he had lost five years of his memory and didn't know who his family was, their son was a stranger to him. He has since been diagnosed with epilepsy. Alesha continued to attend to Nick's needs and those of her

family, however, soon after she disclosed to Pania she was low in mood. Pania encouraged Alesha to access the doctor for her own mental health, which she did. Strategies were also discussed with Alesha around self-care and giving herself some time out.

Additional support we offer as part of the Family Start programme is helping parents and families deal with the challenges of life and work alongside them to strengthen their skills.

Pania has said "throughout Alesha's time with Family Start she has been engaging, knowledgeable and proactive in caring for Nick and attending to his medical needs and appointments. Both parents acknowledge how special their boy is and he has been their priority in ensuring he gets what he needs."

Alesha and her family have recently moved to Timaru to start the next chapter in their lives and we wish them the very best for their future. We are grateful we were able to witness some amazing moments in the earliest parts of Nick's life and to be able to walk along the path of parenthood with them.

You can help children and families in need for as little as \$30 per month, by donating online at www.anglicanfamilycare.org.nz or completing the coupon on Page 8.





the changing landscape

This article focuses on the volatile and changing landscape of the social services sector for 2016.

Government has announced that their Community Investment strategy will be implemented over the next three years, and that funding to our sector needs to change. It is difficult to understand exactly what this means for Anglican Family Care Centre's future. We do know that our funding to deliver counselling services in Central Otago will end on 30 June 2016, and that our budget services are being 're-designed', with existing funding ending on 31 October 2016.

It is tempting to re-phrase all the government language – 'modernise', 'reprioritise', 'review' – into 'reduce' funding. Whatever the result, the future is uncertain. We are concerned that Otago is likely to lose funding to other parts of the country with concentrated areas of need.

We continue to respond to requests for support and intervention into the lives of some of the most vulnerable children in our society. This is not changing. We were delighted to learn that the evaluation of the Family Start programme has endorsed the long term effectiveness of our work with newborn babies and their families.

We know that we are making a difference, as our clients become more confident in telling their stories of courage and hope in making change as a result of our support.

The biggest barrier we face is one of 'poverty' of the spirit, the hopelessness and despair faced by those who encounter family violence, abuse, addictions and financial challenges. It is very rewarding to see the growing hope and resilience emerging from our support, as families strengthen their ability to provide safe and nurturing care for their children.

Whilst the landscape is forever changing, some things do stay the same. Our commitment to continue to support the most vulnerable children is unwavering. To do so, we must rely on the generosity of our community to maintain the high standards of programmes and services we provide. Elsewhere in this issue you will read of the incredible differences we can make in the lives of those we support.

SUPPORT NEEDED IN NORTH OTAGO

Late last year Anglican Family Care was approached by Anglican Care South Canterbury to see if we would consider delivering the OCEANS Grief and Loss Programme in Oamaru.

OCEANS is a group programme for children 5-15 years old experiencing grief and loss e.g. resulting from a parent or someone significant in their life dying, through the divorce or separation of their parents or in support of those children transitioning through foster relationships.

Parenting, child and youth behaviour concerns are frequently raised and discussed in North Otago community forums and often the main reason for referral to community agencies like Strengthening Families. There is also an increasing level of single parents in the district (17.6% of people are separated, divorced or widowed and 12.4% of families in the Waitaki region are one-parent with children families) struggling to provide the much needed support to this group of vulnerable children.

Health professionals state that there are increasing trends of younger clients needing counselling services and support and a widening gap in funded services for necessary earlier intervention. The lack of support to this vulnerable group is well evidenced to correlate to increasing problems with mental health and addictions, drug and alcohol abuse and youth suicide. For the whole of the Southern region the Waitaki district has the highest average suicide rate 13.2 per 100,000 per annum so it's time we stand up and make a change. With 18% of the Waitaki population under

the age of 15 the OCEANS Grief and Loss Programme is designed not only to directly benefit those children but will indirectly improve the lives of the wider family and community providing a more stable and positive outlook for the future.

The Programme is a huge success in South Canterbury with many success stories of children learning to talk about their loss or losses. Many come feeling different from others and unsupported, but upon meeting other children with similar feeling associated with their loss they realise they are 'normal' and grief is normal in a person's life. Each group is made up of up to six children or young people and they are supported through the programme by two trained and caring Facilitators.

At present North Otago has no similar services available, and with the need so great and no government funding available for such work, we are encouraging our community to support Anglican Family Care to deliver this programme. You can support the on-going OCEANS programme by donating online at www.anglicanfamilycare.org.nz or by filling in a coupon on page 8.



BACK: Matt Cameron, Oceans Co-ordinator for Anglican Care South Canterbury; Rev Ken Light, St Mary's.; Craig Ashton, Anglican Family Care and John Shoaf, Board Chair, Anglican Care South Canterbury. FRONT: Kathy Richards, Anglican Family Care; Nicola Taylor, Anglican Family Care; Dawn Harrison, St Mary's Warden and Lay Minister.



Thank You

We are grateful to our dedicated donors, volunteers, staff, supporters and community partners for so many things.

Christmas is a difficult time for most of our clients, but with your amazing support we were able to help hundreds of Otago families over the Christmas period. The donated funds have helped us provide much needed support to children and their families in our region.



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Dunedin 9058

(Donations over \$5.00 are tax deductible. Charities Commission Number CC 24152)

You can also make a credit card donation online at anglicanfamilycare.co.nz

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