

Te Kete Atawhai

MERCY BASKET



MERCY FACES 2014: McAuley High School Principal Anne Miles with this year's Head Girl Hinemoa Finau (left) and deputy Head Girl Selena Tugaga. Mrs Miles talks about what makes McAuley, a diocesan school founded by the Sisters of Mercy, special – page 9.



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Dreams for the future shaped by years at St Mary's

Nadine Houia-Ashwell is a graduate of St Mary's College, Wellington, studying there from 2008 as a Year 9 student until leaving from Year 13 in 2012. With a number of awards, including a Māori and Pacific Island Entrance Scholarship from Otago University, she began Health Science studies in Dunedin in 2013 and hopes to return to her home of Porirua to practise as a GP, specialising in neonatal care and obstetrics.

WITH IWI AFFILIATIONS WITH NGAPUHI ON HER MOTHER'S side and Ngāi Tahu and Ngāti Porou on her father's, Nadine also received a Tū Kahika Health Sciences Foundation Year scholarship, which guaranteed her a place in Arana College, with \$5000 off her residential fees and her tuition fees completely paid for one year.

Looking back on her time at St Mary's, Nadine says that 'sisterhood' was one of the values that made a difference. "Being a relatively small school means that you really get to know the other girls. We definitely had our clashes, but we all shared a common goal – to win the game, to get the grades and to maintain the St Mary's reputation.

"Mrs Mary Cook, the principal throughout my time at St Mary's, was quite strong on this."

"My sense of 'sisterhood' was enhanced for me by participation in sport and by the fact that I have a twin sister. We went to school together, trained and played together and went on tournaments with each other. In my final year, most of us were offered leadership positions as well."

Some key memories of her time at St Mary's remind Nadine of what 'sisterhood' means. One was in Year 13, qualifying for the Secondary Schools Basketball nationals for the first time in 19 years. "We had been trying every year up to 2012, and it was important to me that we had this experience before leaving high school."

Another outstanding memory from her Year 13 comes from the Wellington Stage Challenge performance, run completely by students. "I was part of the backstage team," Nadine recalls. "In the final dance I remember watching from behind the stage and seeing all our girls march onto the stage. The lights were on and everyone was smiling. The song started, and the girls put their hands up one after the other, in a canon formation, with a ripple effect."

'Empathy' was another quality emphasised at St Mary's, says Nadine. "I met heaps of girls from backgrounds very different from mine. I made friends with girls whom I would probably never have associated with, based on where they were from or what they looked like.

"The environment that Mary Cook instilled and that teachers maintained was very positive and encouraging. If we were determined to reach something and showed that we wanted it

hard enough, the teachers would go all-out to help us get there."

St Mary's College helped to prepare Nadine for her course "by showing me that there are people and support systems to help me achieve my goals and dreams. Going to university was always a goal, but it seemed distant because of financial constraints and the fact that no one in my family had ever gone to university.

"My family wanted to support me but didn't know how – because they'd never had that experience. I'd like to make special mention of my dean, Mrs Judy Houlahan, who went above and beyond to help with university and scholarship applications.

"St Mary's also helped by teaching good study habits and time management. I learnt how to prioritise tasks, whether they be academic or sport, course subjects or extra-curricular. I also learnt not to take on too much. So I chose not to participate in competitive sport in my first two years at university, to give priority to my study. I hope to get back into competitive basketball and netball once I've gained entry into Medicine. For now, I've been satisfied with social sports provided by Te Roopu Māori (the Māori students' association at Otago).

Despite being raised through the Catholic education system, Nadine says she has never really been in touch with her religious side. But this is taking on new meaning, as she aspires to become a doctor specialising in neonatal care and obstetrics. "Helping to bring life into the world has to be

one of the most beautiful and amazing things a person can do.

"God may not have given us the power to take life through suicide or euthanasia, but God does offer us the power of knowledge, through which I may be able to help bring life into the world and prolong it.

"When I think of other things I could be doing, there's absolutely nothing else I'd rather do. With the continuous support of my family, some amazing friends who share my dream and my Tū Kahika whānau, I'm exactly where I want to be in my life. And I'm so genuinely and unbelievably thankful for that!"

"How far I have come and what I have achieved to date is largely a reflection of how St Mary's has provided me with the tools I needed to get here. I can confidently say that if I had never gone to St Mary's, I wouldn't be the woman I am today."



NADINE Houia-Ashwell.... years at St Mary's College helped to shape goals for the future.

After eight years at the helm of Te Waipuna Puawai in Ellerslie, Puamiria Maaka resigns at the end of this year, to keep the promise she made when she took on the role to create a space on her turangawaewae for her grandchildren. Here she looks back on her time with Mercy, and forward to what the future holds.

A Mercy woman returns to her papa kāinga

When laywoman Puamiria Maaka assumed the management of this Mercy community development venture from Sister of Mercy Cheryl Connelly who was its founder and manager for eight years, she admits to having felt anxious about how she would succeed in the task.

SHE HAD THOUGHT IN THOSE DAYS THAT MERCY WAS THE DOMAIN of religious. "I've moved on from there, to being able to own that I too am a Mercy woman. The journey has helped me to understand that Mercy can be embraced and practised by anyone who is so inclined.

"That's why I have real confidence that Te Waipuna Puawai will continue to flourish, without Sisters of Mercy needing to be the vision-holders and leaders in this place."

She notes that Catherine McAuley herself spent most of her life as a laywoman. "This insight was really helpful to me when I had the privilege of going to Dublin. That was a transforming time for me, a chance to understand Catherine's life better.

"And it gave me permission to claim to be a Mercy woman, as well. I don't have to take the step of taking religious vows to practise in that way. I can emulate what she left us as a model. That's her legacy, to all of us."

Ask Puamiria about the milestones in her tenure, and she'll talk about people's lives and the changes they've made. "You can't get away from the fact that we work with people here. So what I remember best are their achievements – graduates of our certificate programmes, or the invitations we still receive from those who have gone on to graduate at tertiary institutions.

"That's something to be really proud of. I do believe that education is a pathway out of poverty. We're assisting people to begin that journey again, giving them confidence to believe that this is possible for themselves. So that's always a real delight."

She also takes pride in the number of multi-year funds which Te Waipuna Puawai (TWP) has been able to secure. Mostly, this means three-year funding. "There are some funders that give five; we haven't secured that yet, so that's a challenge as we go forward. Because financial sustainability is the biggest challenge we face."

Government agencies are often looking for 'big wins' really quickly. "But the small, incremental changes are important, too, especially when you know the context in which that progress has been made. "It may not seem huge to others, but changes in people's lives have always been very satisfying to observe."

Puamiria says she also takes pride in tracking where the organization's referrals come from. "I'm extremely proud of the

word-of-mouth referrals we have maintained over the years. Our grass-roots referrals – from people who have experienced our services – are the best advertisement we could hope for.

"It makes for a much easier relationship with newcomers when they come to us from choice, rather than being referred by an agency such as Police or Child, Youth and Family, compelled to do something."

When she first arrived, Puamiria could often see a very predictable pathway. Many who experienced TWP's services went on to do a degree in social work. "I'm delighted to say that this has changed. "We see them now in other community organisations. They've gone on to become qualified nurses, mid-wives, fashion designers, social workers and community workers.

"My new grand-daughter arrived yesterday, and who should I see at Middlemore Hospital but one of our participants who works there as an orderly! Some of our women are on school boards of trustees. They are working in waste-reduction programmes, they are the walking-school-bus mums, teacher-aides in our local schools. They are qualified special language teachers, primary school teachers.

"I'm not saying that TWP is directly responsible for these outcomes. But we've certainly played a part."

In keeping with its Mercy values,

TWP works with the poor. "How we respond to that is principally through education, which is really key, and through our wrap-around tailored support for the family," says Puamiria. "That's our business – responding to the needs of poor people in the Tamaki community. Material poverty – when people can't meet their basic needs of shelter and food."

She recalls a recent visit from a group of Probus women, who have been among TWP's generous supporters. "One of them asked me, 'Does poverty really exist in New Zealand?' My guess is that her image was of the starving African child on a dusty road. Of course, we don't see that here.

"But the definition of poverty in New Zealand is different. This involves children who aren't guaranteed new shoes or a raincoat as winter starts, who can't count on warm housing or school lunches, whose parents struggle to find enough money to



BAGGOT St pilgrim.... 'permitted to be a Mercy woman'

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A Mercy woman returns to her papa kāinga

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buy food for the week, or to provide secure and dry housing. That's how we define poverty in New Zealand, and yes, it does exist.

"My visitor's response was to ask, 'What can I do?' I said, 'If you just helped one person, and if everyone did the same, what a difference that would make. Let's not use the problem being so big as an excuse for doing nothing. Because we can all contribute in small ways. We just need to recognise that it's a possibility for ourselves.'"

Puamiria has three children and her second moko has just been born. "As someone who was raised by grandparents who were really involved in the extended whānau, I have a sense of duty and obligation to do the same.

"When I first took on this role, I always knew that this would be my last year, because I had a plan to return to my hometown when I turned 50 – as I did in July. I've chosen to commit myself to three significant things. One will be service to others, because that's in my DNA.

"The second is new. I want to dedicate some time to the Earth, and I suspect this could be around water, because that's an issue which is really significant in Rotorua. Māori have a lot of land that we either farm or forest, so it could be in that area.

"The third thing is that I want to dedicate a lot more time to my own growth and development, because up to this point I've been defined by my life as a mother and by my commitment to work. So when I move to Rotorua, I deliberately want to do no work for a time. It's a scary prospect.

"It's a bit like jumping into the abyss, with enough fear to tell me that I'm alive without crippling me. And enough faith to assure



PUAMIRIA Maaka, pictured earlier this year at the launch of G-FIT (Growing Financial Independence in Tāmaki), an initiative she helped to found to educate whānau about the long-term effects of high-interest loans and the dangers of home shopping trucks that prey on low-income areas.

for Te Waipuna Puawai to get new energy and new leadership. There will be change, understandably, but TWP deserves that."

me that the decision I make about how to invest my time will be a good one.

"My first project is to build a sustainable house on my papa kāinga, on the whenua where my tūpuna were born. It will be the house that I die in, so I'll take my time to future-proof it.

"When I reflect on my life, I see that other people have shoulder-tapped me for every significant decision. It's time now for me to make this decision for myself, instead of waiting for the shoulder-taps. I can be influenced, but the next decision will definitely be my own.

"It's time for me to move on. And it's time

Mercy college raises funds for migrant women's refuge

Students of St Mary's College, Wellington, worked hard during Mission Month last June to raise funds to help open a safe house for Shakti in Wellington. This is a not-for-profit community organisation that specialises in supporting women and children of Asian, African and Middle Eastern origin who face domestic or family violence.

THE NEED WAS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE CAPITAL AFTER TWO WOMEN were murdered as a result of abusive relationships in the past 12 months.

Pupils from St Mary's College ran raffles, held a sausage sizzle, sold plants and baking, and sold t-shirts of two different designs. As well, they held an annual mufti day. Altogether, they raised a total of \$9500, a record collection for their Mission Month appeal.

On hand to receive the huge novelty cheque was Pollyanne Pena, convenor for Shakti Wellington and a past pupil of both St Mary's College Wellington and nearby Sacred Heart School Thorndon. She wanted to come to the college to thank the girls for the money raised and was overwhelmed when presented with the outsized cheque.

The money from St Mary's has gone some way towards securing a much-needed safe house which opened in Wellington in September for migrant and refugee women.

Over the years, Shakti has grown from the confines of one tiny room to a national umbrella organisation with seven member centres in Auckland, central North Island, Wellington and the South Island. Helen Clark is currently Shakti's patron.



SHAKTI convenor Pollyanne Pena receives the \$9500 cheque from senior students at St Mary's College, Wellington, raised during Mission Month.

From second-hand goods to first-class care

Sister of Mercy Patrice Lowell lives at St Mary's Convent in Ponsonby. Three days a week, she works for half a day as a volunteer at the Mercy Hospice Shop in that suburb.

MOST DAYS SHE MAKES THE 10 OR 15-minute walk, taking a short route that she learnt recently from watching girls from nearby St Mary's College. "Well, that's brainy of them," I thought. 'Much smarter than going the longer way I'd taken for so long.'"

If it's raining heavily, she takes a taxi. Most days, she gets a ride home with one of the volunteers who work in the shop.

Manager of the shop since it opened nine years ago is Maria Baird, who also liaises with the managers of the hospice's other seven stores throughout the city. Maria says that Sr Patrice is a very special part of her team's working day.

"We treasure her for who she is. We value the presence of the Sisters of Mercy as a key part of our story. We understand the work they have done and we try to continue in their footsteps, providing for the community as well as fund-raising for Mercy Hospice Auckland."

Patrice works at the back of the shop; her special responsibility is to steam clothes before they are hung on display. "Today was tiring, because we had a lot of frocks that were very creased.

"It takes time for the steamer to get the creases out. It's a special steam iron which has been repaired and now works like new." Maria says the garments would never get such high prices without the careful ironing Patrice provides.

For more than 13 years, Patrice travelled across town to work in the St Vincent de Paul Shop in Avondale. She would catch an early ferry from the Devonport convent where she lived, walk up to St Patrick's Cathedral for Mass, meditation and prayers, before catching a bus to Avondale.

It was a long day. "Coming back, I'd sometimes miss the ferry by just a second, and would have to wait half an hour for the next one, then walk home to the convent."

"It was Sr Natalie Byers, who worked at the hospice as a music therapist, who told me that the hospice was opening a shop in Ponsonby. It seemed such a lovely prospect, so I came back to St Mary's to live." She and Maria started together, when the shop opened. Now the hospice has eight shops, all thriving.

"I think it's the people who make them so successful," says Patrice. "Customers get to know them, and come back again and again. They like what they see and are happy with what they buy. They appreciate the good quality of the goods.

"What I really like is how caring the managers are of the volunteers. They go out of their way to show that care. They are so appreciative of what we do; that really makes the difference."

Patrice brings fruit from the convent kitchen and prepares lunch for her colleagues. "She has taken it upon herself to make us a beautiful fruit lunch," says Maria. "We share it together and take time to catch up in a day that's always busy."



SISTER of Mercy Patrice Lowell on the job at Mercy Hospice Shop in Ponsonby. With her is store manager Maria Baird, who says "we treasure her for who she is." Next to Patrice is a frock, waiting to be steamed before it goes on display.

Patrice isn't in the front of the shop, "but I can tell you that she is adored by all the volunteers. We treasure her as someone who brings warmth and aroha into our workplace. She loves us dearly and we feel the same for her."

When she's not working at the hospice shop, Patrice likes nothing better than to use her Gold Card to take a train to the outer suburbs. Every second Friday she catches up with long-time friend Margaret Porter who once worked with her at the Vincent de Paul shop in Avondale and who now looks after the phone in the hospice shop at Pt Chevalier.

Patrice is a fan of MP Winston Peters, whose inspiration lies behind the superannuitants' Gold Card. "John Key said the card might have to go, but he'd lose votes if it went. It's marvellous. I don't drive a car, so the free bus and train are how I get around."

She believes Mercy's founder Catherine McAuley would be happy to see what the hospice does. "Some of the patients could never afford the care but they get the best of attention. And it's the hospice shops that help this to happen. That's why I wanted to work in the shop and why I love it so much."

Patrice celebrated her golden jubilee as a Sister of Mercy three years ago. She has talked to Maria about retiring, "but she said I should keep going as long as I can. And I think that's the best way. I'd go silly if I had to stay in all day. You can't sit down and do nothing."

Maria says that Patrice simply won't slow down. "We have a conversation at the start of each year, and I have to say that we lose the battle. Three days a week she stands and steams garments for us. I don't think she will ever give up, and we'll continue to welcome her until she decides otherwise.

"Patrice has been with me since we opened on December 5 in 2005, and we have a bond that is truly special. We are all better for having her in our lives."

'Valley of Faith' testament to pioneer women

Sister of Mercy Marcienne Kirk, archivist at St Mary's Convent in Ponsonby, is the author of several books, including her history of Mother Cecilia Maher and the first Sisters of Mercy in New Zealand.

AT THE LAUNCH IN 2009 OF LEGACY, THE STORY OF ST MARY'S College Auckland, Sr Marcienne said she had enjoyed writing the book despite the hard work, and added, "if I have any wits left, I'd still like to write a bit more."

Seven years later, another book has emerged, though this one has been more of a team effort. "Valley of Faith" is the story of the Sisters of Mercy who have lived and worked in the remote Northland community of Pawarenga.

Helping Sr Marcienne on this project for the past year have been Sr de Pazzi Hudner, also of St Mary's Convent, and Mrs Lyn Ryan, a former deputy principal of Carmel College who now spends a day each week working in the archives of the Ponsonby convent.

Sr Marcienne says that with failing sight she could never have produced this volume on her own. "We work as a team when we do anything in the way of research. We have a huge collection of letters and photos which simply sit there, because there's so little chance to share them; we don't have a great display area."

Sisters in the community came back last year from the unveiling of the headstone of Sr Elizabeth Ihaka, who had been buried in Pawarenga in August 2011. "One of them commented how so many of the younger sisters knew so little about Pawarenga, although it's been one of our most important ministries. So we agreed to write it up."

Around 10 or 12 of the sisters who served in Pawarenga wrote memoirs after they retired. "The longest of these was written by Sr M Peter Mellor who had been there for three different periods of time, and who left quite a detailed record."

"But others had done so, too, and our task was to collate them in some kind of chronological order, starting with a little covering story of how Mother Josephine Kenny, superior of the Auckland Congregation, had felt called to serve the Māori people."

"She went to Pawarenga in 1926, where the priest at the time was Fr Andrew Zangerl, a wonderful Mill Hill missionary who had already started to build a school. The two of them decided it would be a very good mission if the Sisters of Mercy could staff it."

"So she agreed, came back to Auckland, and in the following year four sisters were sent to Northland. By that time, the school was finished and Fr Zangerl had a convent almost completed."

A focus of the story is the contribution that pioneer women have made to the history of our nation, says Sr Marcienne. "These sisters lived very much in the way of pioneer women. This was a rural area, very isolated and remote. Once they went there, they had to stay – no question of popping down to Auckland for a visit."

"The nearest settlement of any size was Broadwood, a good hour-and-a-half's drive away. Those first sisters found wonderful generosity and cooperation from the local people."

"The afternoon they arrived, they were greeted by several Māori women who said, 'whatever we have is yours.' They frequently left gifts at the convent – fish and vegetables, fresh meat if they'd killed an animal. In this way, they supplemented what the sisters were able to provide for themselves. They soon



BOOK TEAM: Sr M de Pazzi Hudner, Sr Marcienne Kirk and Mrs Lyn Ryan, at the launch last month of their book, Valley of Faith. Copies of the book were blessed by Fr Bernard Dennehy who had spent some years serving in the parish of Pawarenga. Present at the launch were Sisters of Mercy and invited guests, including several with links to the Pawarenga community, among them kaumātua Pio and Chrissie Jacobs.

had a vegetable garden going and they kept hens. But it was a very basic state of life in those first years."

The school at Pawarenga was always a fairly small one, "mainly because of the distance that some children would have had to travel. Some came on horse-back, some walked; and a lot depended on the weather as to whether they could get to school or not."

"Three of the sisters taught in the school, the fourth looked after the house and did the cooking. As well, they were very soon involved in the life of the marae, made welcome at all the ceremonies. They visited the sick and helped mothers with new-born babies, travelling mainly by river because although there was a dust track, you couldn't call it a road until around the 1940s. Later it was sealed."

Father Zangerl was in Pawarenga for 40 years, a tower of strength, says Sr Marcienne. "Like most of the Mill Hill priests, he could turn his hand to anything. He built a generator, so that eventually they had running water and an electricity system. But that was later on."

Of the four sisters who arrived in 1927, Sr M Cyril was a New Zealander from Hikutaia, "very practical, with a marvellous relationship with Māori. She came to speak the language well, she was greatly loved and people turned to her for all sorts of help."

"Sr Helen Flynn was an Irish woman, very delicate; she couldn't stay beyond a few months, and had to be replaced because of sickness."

The other two – Sr Anselm and Sr Marcellus – were "women who were ready to nurse the sick, visit remote areas by horse

Building on the faith of Mercy pioneers

Once a month, Sister of Mercy Anne Frances Bates packs her car and heads north from Auckland on the long trip to Pawarenga, a tiny settlement at the southern end of Whangape Harbour in Northland.

IT'S A TRIP OF AROUND 316KMS, AND IT TAKES ANNE Frances a day to get there and another to come home. She usually breaks the trip at Kaitaia, staying there overnight. Her destination is Te Kura o Hata Maria, the small decile 2 school, with two classrooms and a roll of around 40 primary school children.

With more than 30 years' experience as a primary school teacher, Anne Frances was asked by the Congregation's leadership to respond to a request from Hata Maria principal, Mrs Maraia Herbert-Pickering, for a resource person to support the school's Religious Education programme and its commitment to Mercy values.

But Anne Frances has enough experience to know how to respond to whatever the need of the moment may be. "When I was there in September, one of the teachers put the RE book in front of me and said, 'We're up to the God strand.'"

"Usually I like to prepare what I'm doing. So I had to do some quick thinking on my feet. I thought I'd improvise, and talk about the beautiful gifts God has given these children in their valley, because that school is the central hub of everything that happens there."

"We talked about the gift of the valley and its maunga (mountain); I asked them to look out of the window and tell me what they could see

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Sr Anne Frances Bates.... building on the work of Mercy pioneers.

or boat. My impression is that they made the best of their lives, multi-talented and prepared to do more than sisters in more 'civilised' places might have done."

Sr Marcienne says that some who served in Pawarenga had returned to Ireland, and several of these responded to requests with very good accounts of their time. Two local sisters were able to provide information, as did two Māori lay women in Auckland whose families still live in Pawarenga. "So it was a matter of finding out what we could, then putting it into chronological order."

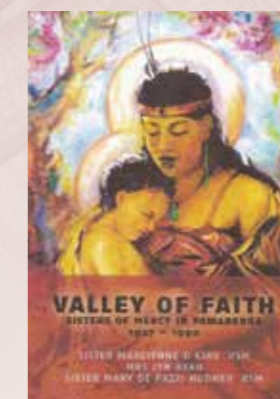
The title of the book sprang from the discussions, says Sr Marcienne. "I gained a deep impression of the wonderful faith of the people of the valley. The natural background is so beautiful, with its harbour and river."

"It occurred to us that today there is not a lot of knowledge, even among our younger sisters, of what missionary work involved in those early days. Some of our teachers have said it would be wonderful if students at Mercy colleges could get an idea of how the faith was preserved, and what sisters and priests did to help their people."

"These days we don't have to fight for our faith as those people in the North did. That was our main motivation – to spread the knowledge of those years and share some insights of its missionary aspect."

Sister of Mercy Elizabeth Ihaka forms part of the story. Like many Māori, she had a large extended family, many of whom still live in Pawarenga where she was born. "She was Sr Mary Zita by profession, and she was an inspiring teacher, spending a good deal of time in several of our convents around Auckland and Rotorua."

"But in her later life she felt the need to go back to her own whānau. She went to Pawarenga and stayed there, doing



LAUNCHED: Valley of Faith: Sisters of Mercy in Pawarenga 1927 - 1990, was launched at a ceremony at St Mary's Convent, Ponsonby on November 11.

The book has been written by Sisters of Mercy Marcienne Kirk and Mary de Pazzi Hudner and Mrs Lyn Ryan.

Copies are available at \$25 plus postage from Sr Patricia Rowe; those wishing to order a copy should email her at patricia.rowe@xtra.co.nz

wonderful work among her people, helping them in times of illness and death.

"She was an inspiration for what the faith had done in Pawarenga, especially in the context of Māori spirituality. She was a great speaker of te reo Māori; and although a woman in what is often a male-dominated culture, she was respected on the marae and spoke when it was necessary."

Te Kura o Hata Maria continues to flourish. "The current principal, Maraia Herbert-Pickering, is a relation of Sr Elizabeth's. It's not a big school; numbers have always varied, partly because families can't always find jobs in the area. Employment is limited, and families tend to move away."

"But I hope they'll find the book helpful, because it's their own history. Mrs Herbert-Pickering has contributed a small piece to the end of the book; she has a strong sense of our Mercy charism."

Building on the faith of Mercy pioneers

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that was God's gift. The little fellow sitting next to me, usually jumping everywhere like a packet of fire-crackers, said 'sheep'.

"So I asked him to tell us what the gifts are that God gives us from sheep. He said, 'We get wool, and meat. And Jesus went to find the lost sheep.'

"I asked him if he would like to share the story about the lost sheep. Which he did. He told the whole story. And the teacher was sitting there opposite, with eyes as big as saucers; she couldn't believe it. It had been a while since they'd done bible stories, but he had retained it and was able to retell it.

"So I go to be a support. The children are certainly getting the message. I think that deep down in their hearts, they've got the Mercy spirit and values, which are reflected in different ways around the staff room and classrooms."

Anne Frances describes a staff-room display of photos of Sisters of Mercy from the past. "I have a strong sense of being in a place where other Sisters of Mercy have lived and worked. I feel as though I'm walking in their shoes, building on the tremendous work they have done.

"When you think back to those early sisters, and what it must have been like for them to have been so isolated, you realise how hard they worked and what faith and love they instilled in the people they served."

Anne Frances says the foyer and staffroom are decorated with posters quoting Catherine McAuley and with pictures of the Mercy story. "The teachers are trying to incorporate some of the Mercy values into a statement for the new Board of Trustees. I plan to help them with that when I go back next time."

She says that many of the children at Te Kura o Hata Maria are living with extended family, being brought up by grandmothers. "They are there because their whānau want them to come back to their roots to learn the history and to know their whakapapa. They come from other places throughout New Zealand, to stay with their nans. They're mostly all related."

She cites an example of their generous response to others. "When I was there last, I found out that not only do they receive bountifully from others, but they also sponsor a child overseas. These children haven't got much, nor do their families; but here they are, supporting someone beyond themselves and their own needs."

Pawarenga is very isolated, she says. "Locals make do with a lot less than we'd manage with in the city, where we can run to the shops every day or two. It's about 40 minutes to Broadwood, an hour to Pak N Save at Kaitaia. But they are happy children and teachers and those who come in as support people are very content.

"I'm well received," she says. "They've told me they love me coming. And the kids do too, because of the cuddles I get and the pictures they've drawn. The fact that



COMPUTERS pose no problems for these two, Larry and Rico Isaacs-Hobson, pupils of Te Kura o Hata Maria in Pawarenga.

they want me to go up for their Jump Jam says a lot to me. They're having Jump Jam next Friday and have pleaded with me to go up. So I will."

Jump Jam is a locally developed aerobics programme for primary and intermediate students and teachers; an inter-school competition at regional and national levels was held last month.

Pawarenga is not new to Anne Frances. She spent six weeks living there, caring for Sr Elizabeth Ihaka towards the end of her life. "I looked after her in her house, took her to Rawene Hospital when necessary and brought her back. It was then that I really got to know the people in the school. If she was in hospital and I was in the house by myself, I would pop over to the school and support them, joining in for any special occasions like a big raffle."

Most times when she visits, Anne Frances walks up the hill to St Gabriel's Church and spends time at the grave of Sr Cyril Corbett, one of the pioneer Sisters of Mercy who came there in 1927. "I have a little talk with her and say, 'you did this work for so long, and you know what it's like here.'"

"I was asked recently if I could get some paint for her grave. One of the staff said 'if you fellas get the paint, I'll do it.' But I wouldn't mind going up during the holidays and helping her."

Anne Frances hopes to carry on with the work next year. "Even though I find the travel tiring, once I get there, I know that they really do appreciate my visits. It's a special place. The staff do a wonderful job under the circumstances, when you think of the isolation. Their classrooms are so vital and alive, full of colour. The school is the hub of the valley. It does my heart good to be there."

Postscript: After recent fund-raising, Sisters of Mercy throughout New Zealand have raised \$3500 towards iPads for the pupils of Te Kura o Hata Maria in Pawarenga..

For more than 10 years, Anne Miles has been principal of McAuley High School, a college for girls founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1963 and now a diocesan integrated school. This year she was a winner in the Fairfax Women of Influence awards, and also received a special commendation from Bishop Pat Dunn when he came to bless and open new buildings at the school. Anne Miles spoke to Te Kete Atawhai about what makes McAuley special....

McAuley's vision: good today, better tomorrow

During her time as principal, Anne Miles has overseen a dramatic rise in the achievement of Maori and Pacific students and an increase in roll numbers. Around 88 percent of the roll of 750 at McAuley High School are now Pacific students. More than 90 percent of students now achieve NCEA and 75 percent gain University Entrance.

THE SCHOOL IS DESIGNATED DECILE 1, WHICH MEANS THAT many of its families struggle with low levels of economic viability. But Anne Miles resists the tendency to label McAuley a 'low-decile school.'

"Calling a school low-decile often assumes low expectations," she says. "We have high expectations and achieve at the same level as those in decile 8 and 9 areas. We believe in our students and we have faith in their abilities."

Anne Miles admits that the school's expectations are high. "We recognise that Christ is present in each of our students; we respect them for their unique qualities and beauty. Our faith is the binding factor."

Cultural diversity means that many students move in two worlds. Close communication with parents has been crucial. "Discussion at information evenings provides parents with a clearer view of our vision to have strong young women.

"Staff also receive professional development on the background and cultural norms of our communities. They are encouraged to respect the rich cultural heritage our students bring with them to school.

"Students are invited to share that cultural richness. At school assemblies, we praise and encourage all success. At the heart of our school is love."

Where possible, the principal employs staff to reflect McAuley High School's diverse ethnicities. The school has Pacific language speakers on staff, who are often the first point of contact for families.

Anne Miles is quick to relate to Catherine McAuley's vision of education as a way of enabling young people to rise above the barriers of poverty. "Our school is a diocesan school with the Mercy charism. We believe in the potential of every student.

"We don't select students on the basis of academic prowess, but on the desire of families for a Catholic education. The gospel and Mercy values are at the heart of our school, and the reason we exist is because of Jesus Christ."

The school's Mercy heritage is reflected in how its buildings are named. Officially opened by Bishop Pat Dunn in September were a new administration block and a three-storey classroom block that boasts up-to-the-minute computing facilities and break-out spaces to allow innovative teaching. Known as the Moera Block, the classrooms honour former principal Sr Moira Feeney. The administration complex has been named the Mercy Block. Other names with a Mercy connection include the English and Technology block named after the Callaghan family, the Catherine Block and the Cecilia Block (after Mother Cecilia Maher, who led New Zealand's first Mercy foundation).

"Our Mercy heritage inspires us to service, and provides us



McAULEY'S current Principal Anne Miles (second from right) with others who have served at the school. (From left) Dame Sr Pauline Engel (a former teacher and deputy principal), Kath Petrie (a former principal and now a member of He Waka Tiaki, the mission team of Mercy Ministries NZ), and Linda McQuade (a former principal and now Vicar for Education in the Auckland diocese).

with a wonderful example. Our gospel values guide us," says Anne Miles.

The school's approach is restorative, she says. "We support our families, our communities, our staff and students. We hope to enable them to grow in every dimension and to move into the community to serve others.

"Service has been the value we've highlighted this year. Our students understand the meaning of service and generosity. It is an enormous privilege to work with them. They sometimes come to school with large hardships on their backs and never complain.

"Catherine's first scholars also wanted an education, so they could make a difference to their families. Our students are immensely proud of being a 'McAuleyan'."

In a Good Practice report earlier this year, the Education Review Office noted that McAuley has extremely effective systems to link with the local community and to gain a deep understanding of the circumstances of its students. School leaders "act on the information gained to ensure that all students arrive at school in full uniform, fully equipped and ready to learn." When students start school, "they already have a sense of belonging and wear their uniform with pride," the ERO observed.

And what of the future? Anne Miles says the school's

(continued over page)

McAuley's vision: good today, better tomorrow

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strategic plan identifies clear goals. "Our aim and vision of providing a Catholic education which is centred in Christ remains constant.

"We want all students to leave school with a career plan, move in to employment and be able to achieve their goals. This means that we strive to enable as many as possible to gain University Entrance. And we want to increase the percentage of students achieving with Merit and Excellence endorsements. We will continue to promote excellence.

"But our priority remains our hope that McAuley High School students leave with a deep faith, that they contribute actively to parish and society, believe in themselves and have inner strength."

Anne Miles expresses delight with the growth of the Mercy Young Adults initiative which was begun at McAuley High School in 2012. "We feel very privileged to be the school where it started. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Sisters of Mercy for their example of lives lived in faith, for their contributions to society and their legacy."



AT the blessing of new buildings at McAuley High School in September are Bishop Pat Dunn, Marist Fr John Joliffe and Mrs Anne Miles.

McAuley – making a difference where it counts

The Fairfax Women of Influence Awards were established by Fairfax Media and Westpac last year to identify New Zealand's most inspiring women across eight categories. Anne Miles shares this year's Social Enterprise category with Jo-Anne Wilkinson of the Foundation for Youth Development.

THE AWARD RECOGNISES WOMEN WHO TAKE AN entrepreneurial approach to current social issues. We asked Anne Miles to identify some of the strategies that McAuley has developed. "Some of our young people face challenges of poverty – over-crowding, language barriers, hunger and working with two cultures, to name a few."

Among the innovative responses she lists the following. An adult literacy and numeracy programme ran successfully for 10 years under the leadership of Barbara Bishop, offering parents the chance to help their children, with practical skills in learning to use a computer, to manage a budget or to gain a driving licence.

"With funding secured from ASB and propped up at times by the Sisters of Mercy and the Catholic Caring Foundation, this programme made an enormous difference to the lives of many in our community," says Anne Miles.

She also names a transition programme within the Catholic primary school at Otago. "With help from the Catholic Caring Foundation, Sister of Mercy Salome Ioane supported families throughout the time their children were at primary school. Issues were identified early, with appropriate support and encouragement."

Another vital link has been the school's close connection with local communities. "Our parental connection programme and parent information evenings, our open door policy, our close liaison with, and visits to, nearby parishes and their schools, have all helped to enlist

support for our school and our students."

McAuley has provided professional development to all staff, enabling them to work in professional learning groups. "We are a community of learners," says Anne Miles.

She has high praise for both staff and the school's board of trustees. With "very generous" support from staff, the school is often open during holidays, with study programmes offered and computers available. The board of trustees places students at the forefront and supports both principal and staff.

And the school strives to support students in need. "Donations to assist our welfare efforts are constantly sought." We do not call on St Vincent de Paul because of the heavy demands on them, but we take our own food parcels to families when these are needed."

The ERO Good Practice report noted last May that McAuley High School's principal "spends a significant amount of time accessing additional resources and funding to support students' wellbeing and learning. She has raised considerable sums of money to pay for uniforms, trips, equipment and lunches, so that girls from the most disadvantaged backgrounds can participate on an equal foot with their peers.

"One of the office staff, working closely with management, discreetly administers welfare payments to those students who need support."

Awards for excellence at Mercy Hospital Dunedin

Mercy Hospital in Dunedin recently held its fourth annual Quality Awards which were celebrated with a gala dinner held at the University of Otago staff club. Nine projects were assessed by a panel of five judges, four of whom were external to the hospital. Winners were presented with the distinctive award carvings, crafted by a local artist and based on the Māori legend of Maui and his jaw-bone fish hook.

AWARDS ARE MADE TO EACH OF THREE SECTIONS – CLINICAL, support services and collaborative projects. The projects have to be of exceptional quality and merit and are not necessarily awarded each year, although this year all three categories were acknowledged.

The clinical project which won this year's supreme award focused on the fluid hazard in operating theatres, where large volumes of fluid can pool on the floor. Research was undertaken to discover new practice techniques for dealing with this issue. The project succeeded in reducing both the amount of fluid and the hazard it poses to staff within the theatre environment. The supreme award is given to the most outstanding project across all sections.

The winning entry in the support services section relates to 'flash sterilization' – a process in which sterilized reusable items are transferred aseptically to the sterile field in the shortest possible time.

The collaborative section was won by the laundry team responsible for distributing clean linen to patients. "This was a good example of the need for collaboration to solve an obvious problem," the judges agreed. "Great to read about the involvement of staff across services to collectively implement recommendations for improvement."

In addition, an award donated by the family of Catherine Scally is made for initiatives to enhance patient safety. It was awarded this year to the clinical section for improving the quality of discharge information.



LAUNDRY team members (from left) Sandra Laidler, Cynthia Darling and Linda Johnston won the Collaborative Section of Mercy Hospital's quality awards this year. Distribution of clean linen to patients is an essential part of their team-work. "This was a good example of the need for collaboration to solve an obvious problem," the judges agreed.



ONE of the distinctive quality awards presented by Mercy Hospital this year. The awards were crafted by Kendall Allum of Kea Jade, based on the Māori legend of Maui and his jaw-bone fish hook. The glass foundation represents water, the basis of all life. The pounamu hook represents a taonga or treasure for gifting. The basalt hook shaft represents strength, while maintaining an openness to human influence. The complete jaw-bone hook symbolises health, well-being and abundance.

The commissioned pieces draw together local resources and craftsmanship, opportunity and human nurturing, explains Janice McDrury, the hospital's mission coordinator. "They symbolise Mercy's efforts to ensure that our staff and services are of the highest quality, and that what we do always responds to the well-being of those we serve."

Mercy charism key for St Anne's principal

Long-serving principal of St Anne's School in Manurewa, Philip Cortesi retires at the end of this year, after 46 years of teaching, over 30 of them as principal, 17 of them at St Anne's School.

THE SCHOOL WAS FOUNDED IN 1952 BY THE Sisters of Mercy, and Philip has been committed to maintaining the school's Mercy charism. "Along with gospel values, the Mercy charism has provided the framework on which to build the life of our school," he says.

"An increasing part of our work here is to reach out to our children and families, especially those in need. The story of our Mercy charism is a living reality."

In his time at St Anne's, Philip has developed a close link with St Theresa's School in Fusi, Samoa, led by the Sisters of Mercy. He and colleagues from St Anne's have visited the school in Fusi to support its staff through professional development and the supply of teaching and learning resources.



Philip Cortesi

He hopes to find ways to continue this support. "As long as the Sisters of Mercy continue to have St Theresa's as part of their mission, I would like to continue my involvement, working at the 'chalk face' with teachers and children. I feel this is where I can be of greatest service."

Philip was farewelled with a thanksgiving Mass in the parish church and a luncheon in the school grounds earlier this month. His plans include more time with family in different parts of the country and some overseas travel.

"I will miss most the wonderful family of children and staff at St Anne's, and the Mercy charism which binds our school family together."

Foundation Day: 12 December 2014

In the Mercy world, Foundation Day marks the day in 1831 when Catherine McAuley and her two companions took their vows as the first Sisters of Mercy. The same day was chosen in 2005 when Sisters of Mercy in New Zealand, Samoa and Tonga became a single Congregation.

On December 12 this year, the new Leadership Team of Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand, elected at the Chapter in September, took office. A ritual of hand-over was held in Wellington to formally acknowledge the event.



THE newly elected Leadership Team of Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand (from left) Srs Raylene Dwyer, Judith Moroney, Tui Cadigan, Sue France and Katrina Fabish (Congregation Leader).

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