

Mercy world responds to tsunami appeal

Sisters of Mercy and their friends around the world have donated NZ\$58,000 to the Congregation's tsunami appeal, launched on behalf of victims in Tonga and Samoa.

News of the appeal was carried by Mercy websites, following the devastating earthquake and tsunami in September.

"The response from across the Mercy world has been amazing," said Patricia Rowe rsm, communications contact for the Congregation in New Zealand.

"The money will be distributed through *Caritas Samoa* and *Caritas Tonga*, who are targeting those

most in need."

Donations may still be made to the Tsunami Appeal; for details, check

www.sistersofmercy.org.nz.

* Carmel College's response - see page 4



NZ Mercy Group GM resigns

Delays by the Congregation in developing structures for mission have led to the resignation of Mr Peter Garty as Group General Manager of Sisters of Mercy Ministries New Zealand Trust.

Following his appointment earlier this year, Mr Garty had been expected to work closely with a Group Manager for Mission, but plans for filling this latter role have been deferred.

This will allow the Congregation's newly elected Leadership Team to discern mission options for the future.

The delay has meant that the position of Group General Manager has not gained the momentum that had been expected.

"In the light of this change in employment circumstances, Peter Garty has resigned from his position," wrote the Congregation's outgoing Leadership Team, in a letter to board members and managers of Mercy ministries.

"We would like to thank Peter for the work he has done in the short time he has been with us. His efforts to bring the concerns of each facility into closer focus and scrutiny have been a most valuable contribution. It is with regret that we farewell him on 11 December."

The task of General Manager is being undertaken by Mr Reuben O'Neill, chair of Tiaki Manatu Ministries Trust, until the incoming Leadership Team has completed its process of consultation and discernment.

He will be supported by Mr Brian McCloy, General Manager of the Congregation's Finance Services.

"We are grateful to both, for their willingness to hold the task until the way ahead is clear," the letter said.



MERCY Leadership Team (from left): Mary Catherwood, Tui Cadigan, Katrina Fabish, Anne Campbell (holding Chapter Statement) and Natalie Murphy.... acknowledgement for "all who companion us."

'Free fall' into heart of Mercy

Sisters of Mercy from New Zealand, Samoa and Tonga gathered for a hand-over ritual in Upper Hutt on December 12, when the new Leadership Team elected at the Congregation's Chapter in September assumed office.

The ceremony was one of several held throughout this country and the Pacific, to mark both the founding of the Congregation by Catherine McAuley in 1831 and the forming of Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand in 2005.

Led by Anne Campbell rsm from Upper Hutt, the team chosen to guide the Congregation for the next

five years includes Tui Cadigan rsm and Mary Catherwood rsm (both from Christchurch), Katrina Fabish rsm (Auckland) and Natalie Murphy rsm (Wellington).

Members of the team were presented with a 'Leadership Cloth', a symbol used at the commencement ceremony in 2005, and a copy of the statement ratified by the recent Chapter. The five were blessed as they touched the Congregation's mauri stone, *Kahikitea Te Iwi (the uplifting of the people)*.

The ritual expressed thanks for the outgoing team for leading the Congregation through four years of transition, ac-

knowledging their pioneering spirit, passion for Mercy and care for sisters. Prayers were also offered for those who had died since the new Congregation was formed.

As the new Congregation Leader led the team from the chapel, holding the Chapter Statement aloft, participants touched the mauri stone as they sang the Chapter mantra, *Tihei Mauri Ora*.

At the afternoon tea of strawberries and ice-cream which followed, Anne Campbell invited sisters to join her "in free fall into the Heart of Mercy." She acknowledged all those "who companion us in Mercy mission at this stage of our journey."

Zinc levels crucial for UN's goals

Raising zinc levels among the population of developing countries was the focus for this year's McAuley Oration, a keynote paper at the International Health Research Network Conference held in Dunedin last month.

Presenting the oration was Rosalind Gibson, Professor of Human Nutrition at Otago University (right). Her research over many years has taken her to parts of sub-Saharan Africa where diets are low in zinc.

Professor Gibson's study has shown that lack of zinc has a major impact on health, increasing the chances of illness and death from infections, and leading to complications at birth for both mother and child. However, zinc



supplements and dietary diversification, especially the consumption of animal protein, can improve maternal health and birth outcomes.

Professor Gibson is on the advisory board of the Dunedin School of Medi-

cine's Centre for International Health, whose director is funded in part by a \$1.5 million gift from the Sisters of Mercy, through Mercy Hospital in Dunedin.

The venture reflects the Congregation's commitment to the UN's millennium development goals, which include reducing child mortality and improving maternal health.

Professor Gibson began her paper with a tribute to Catherine McAuley, naming education for the poor and shelter for the homeless as key aspects of her ministry.

The two-day conference was attended by participants from Otago and Auckland universities, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Health and NZ Aid. Topics ranged from pure science to nutrition, communicable diseases and public health issues.

Mercy Hospital's mission coordinator, Janice McDruy described the two day event as stimulating.

"It was wonderful to see such collaboration among the research community."

Tamaki makeover—a place fit to live in

In an innovative partnership between central and local government and community agencies, Mercy women are helping to shape plans aimed at transforming Auckland's eastern region of Tamaki over the next 20 years.

The vision includes new and refurbished housing, more local jobs, safer streets, improved health and better delivery of services. The key to success lies in local people having a say in how those services are delivered.

"The Government's intention is not to increase the amount of money it's ploughing into this community," says Puamiria Maaka, manager of Te Waipuna Puawai Mercy Oasis who also coordinates a group of 11 community leaders now engaged in the Tamaki Transformation Programme.

"TTP's aim is to use the funds in a different way, to get better outcomes for families. Government officials have realised that you can only achieve this if you work with the people you're trying to reach.

"What's new here is ensuring that people who live and work in the area help to co-design and co-deliver what's planned. The community needs to own the programme and take responsibility for its outcomes. You only get that if they're participating fully."

TTP is bringing agencies together, says Puamiria, but they all work very much in their own silos. "So there's an organisational shift that needs to occur, and a willingness on their part to do so.



MERCY manager Puamiria Maaka ... better outcomes when people shape their services

"The City Council is interested in urban design, in parks and street-scapes. Our interest is in what works for the family. But it's all inter-related. We need to take a much more holistic view. It's about basic needs being met, for a huge proportion of our population.

"We're talking about poverty, and all the associated social issues arising from that. Issues like housing and education, employment, choices for our young people."

High on Puamiria's list are services

for men. "From our own context of vulnerable families, we see that men are often incarcerated, unemployed, or not leading healthy lifestyles. They're seeking support as parents and partners.

"These are low-income men, and unless they have committed some offence and are court-referred, they can't access affordable support that they need.

"Our vision is around the restoration of women and children. But the men in our communities need as much support as women to realise their full potential. And there's a significant lack of services for them."

"Others contributing a Mercy perspective to TTP are Te Waipuna Puawai board member Kathryn Scott and Tara Joe who heads the agency's project for teen mothers.

"Our contribution comes from our past experience of working alongside individuals and their families in the community at large," says Puamiria, adding that Mercy is well recognised for its hospitality.

"Everybody knows that when they meet here, they're bound to get a cup of tea and something delicious on the side. We're very conscious of the kind of environment we create when we host meetings.

"We're very well prepared, we keep to time, we enjoy each other's company. We have vigorous debate, but always part as friends. That's Mercy in action. We are stronger as a group if we can get a collective perspective that we can all stand with."

Teresians –in touch with elderly living alone

As a child, Frances Petricevic was in awe of the nuns who taught her at St Michael's in Remuera. "We never thought of them without a habit. We were always on our best behaviour."

Since joining the Teresians, a club run by Sisters of Mercy Elderly Outreach in Auckland's eastern suburbs, her views have changed. "I've got to know sisters as people." A succession of three Irish Sisters of Mercy with the same first name gave the club its name.

The group was formed in 1990 by Sr Teresa Kilcourse, with a focus on aquarobics - "a nice social event, with a reduced fee," Frances recalls. "Twice-weekly, all year round, in a heated pool.

"Sr Teresa did aquarobics with us. Someone would have a birthday; Sister would be invited, and she'd sing and dance. The Irish ones especially loved a bit of music."

These days, it's Sr Beverley Parkinson who runs the group, with the help of an organising committee. Frances says she was tricked into joining this, but doesn't really mind.

"Sr Beverley does most of the work. She arranges all our trips, books the bus, deals with cancellations and double bookings.

"It's hard to satisfy everyone. Some are on walkers and can't do long trips. She goes and sights the venues first, before she comes back and suggests them. As well as that, she takes people to hospital and doctor's appointments.

"Sr Beverley is wonderful; I've

never seen her lose her temper."

The group has a regular booking with a local bus company. Trips are subsidized, with a \$20 fee that covers transport, lunch and an entrance fee if required. Venues have included the migratory bird sanctuary at Miranda and the marine sanctuary at Goat Island.

"The bus took us right down to the ramp, where we boarded a glass-bottomed boat. We could see fish coming from all directions; the water was so clear."

Most of the Teresians live on their own. "I think there are only three of us whose husbands are still alive," says Frances.

"Many are in flats on their own, living on National Super. This is their one opportunity each month for an outing, with a lunch that's not going to cost them a fortune."



TERESIAN Frances Petricevic (left) with the group's co-ordinator, Sister of Mercy Beverley Parkinson ... 'we have lots of laughs; if you get out and have a laugh, you feel good.'

Funds aid new way of teaching, learning

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teaching block and hall at Paul VI. Senior students are now using laptops, although internet access remains poor.

A new staffroom allows space where teachers can plan together. And a switch to having students move from one class to another means that teachers can set up their rooms more effectively.

Fund-raising at Carmel College is matched with awareness-raising. Off their own bat, one Year 12 class raised \$300 this year with a bake sale; the proceeds went towards a DVD which the organiser was able to present at a school assembly to Sisters of Mercy returning to Samoa after their recent Chapter.

The girls were thanked by Paul VI principal, Sr Fatima Lemisio. Her deputy, Sr Anna Nicholls had a story to share, about meeting one of their pupils working at the airport as the sisters flew out on their

late-night flight to Auckland.

"Sr Anna asked the girl if the work interfered with her school-work," Kath relates. "The girl explained that the money she earned went to pay her school fees.

"Anna's challenge to our students was to ask how many of them with part-time jobs would be willing to pay for their schooling.

"I think our kids could be hugely enriched by seeing the spirit of Paul VI students, by the warmth of their welcome to each other and to us, by the way their Christian faith is bound up with daily life."

Meanwhile, the fund-raising at Carmel continues. Two Year 13 students hope to provide stationery packs for each of their sister school's 200 pupils at the start of next year.

"In some of the classrooms I saw, there was just one pair of scissors, and one glue stick," Kath recalls.

And the grateful parent of one

The group also meets monthly in Glen Innes, with a gold coin to enter. "But that's not compulsory - if someone can't afford it, there's no problem."

Raffles help to boost funds. Attractions include entertainers and guest speakers.

Numbers averaged around 30 during the winter, though this may pick up as the weather improves, says Frances, "and we'll get a crowd for our Christmas dinner, don't worry."

With several now in their 90s, the Teresians fill a vital need.

"We have a lot of laughs, and that's important, especially in you're feeling down. At our age, most have got something wrong physically.

"If you're just sitting at home, you brood. If you get out, and somebody teases you and you have a laugh, you feel good."

school leaver is hosting a lunch for Carmel's staff, BOT and PTFA. All profits from the \$50 cover charge will go to Paul VI College.

Kath Deady would like to see some exchanges of students and teachers between the two schools. "If staff from Samoa could see how we do things, it might change how they go about teaching.

"They'd probably be a bit horrified at how unruly some of our classes are, and at the frankness of some of the discussion that goes on here. Not that Carmel is full of unruly students, but it's a different culture.

"Certainly, our focus from here on will be on learning outcomes, and on structures to provide them.

"We're not alone in supporting Samoa," Kath concludes. "Other Mercy schools are also involved, and that's fantastic, because every school has something different to offer."

Mercy hospital's outreach lets dads up-skill as parents

Mercy education is mostly targeted to women and girls, but in Dunedin this year outreach funds from Mercy Hospital have helped men in their role as husbands and fathers.

Game On is a parenting group for men, offered by Catholic Social Services in Dunedin. The two-hour programme runs four times a year, over six weeks; 22 men were enrolled in the series which was held last month.

The programme is one of several funded by Mercy Hospital in Dunedin, as part of its community outreach.

Some men get to hear about the programme from participants; others are referred by social agencies, Corrections or *Child, Youth and Family*.

There is a real need for a programme specifically to support men in their role as parents, says CSS director Ian Donnelly.

Game On starts from the premise that there is no rule book or training manual for being a dad. The group has a positive focus, looking

at what works already and seeking to build on this.

"The harmful impact of anger and domestic violence is explored, and new strategies are learnt to avoid continuing the destructive patterns."

Led by a CSS social worker and counsellor, both men, the course covers topics such as positive role-modelling, communicating with children and teenagers, dealing with conflict, boundaries and safe discipline.

"*Game On* has helped me to connect with other dads, and to see that I'm not alone in this," said one recent participant. "I've got to learn what I can use when my son gets older," said another.

The course has resulted in positive changes. "I've gained a few really good skills for managing my anger," comments one. Says another: "I'm communicating better with my wife and children. I've become a better listener, and also have a better understanding about myself as a father."

Ian Donnelly says the support



Dunedin CSS director Ian Donnelly

from Mercy Hospital has helped Catholic Social Services through the worst of this year's global recession.

"Most of our referrals are from low-income families, struggling on vastly insufficient incomes. Many are juggling to pay rent, cover health costs and keep food on the table.

"Our services have adapted over 40 years, but what hasn't changed is our commitment to support families, especially those who are marginalised, isolated and under stress."

Tsunami upsets plans for Carmel teachers

When Carmel College principal Kath Deady flew to Samoa in September, she and her colleague, maths teacher Robin Thomas, planned to spend their week working alongside staff and students at Paul VI College.

But plans were dramatically changed by the tsunami that struck Samoa the day they arrived. Instead, the pair began by joining Sisters of Mercy to donate blood at Apia's hospital.

"The thing I found hardest was not giving blood, but saying my age out loud," Kath confesses. "The photos on my cell phone look as though we were having lots of fun.

"But I think it was really nervousness, because we could see from our visit to the hospital how things were on the other side of the island."

On a trip next day to the devastated region, Kath recognised a colleague from Auckland, a lecturer from Massey University who had helped to set up a mentoring programme for Pasifika students at Carmel College.

"We stopped to speak with Ben. He told us that 13 of his family had been killed, including two of his sisters. It made me feel how small the world is. It made me realise, too,



CARMEL COLLEGE principal Kath Deady (front left) and teacher Robin Thomas (back centre) in Samoa with Mercy Sisters Akenese Nun Toon, Tulili Ah Ping and Anna Nicholls.

how closely affected all Samoans have been."

This was Kath Deady's second visit to Samoa; she had spent part of her sabbatical there last year, looking to assess the most effective support Mercy schools in New Zealand can provide.

"It was very beneficial, because it helped me to source what I call the "learned helplessness" of many Pasifika students - lacking the confidence to give an answer because it might

be wrong, waiting instead for the teacher to fill in."

The relationship between Carmel College and Paul VI has grown over more than 20 years, with a steady flow of fund-raising and resources. But in the past two years the support has moved to a new phase, with a focus on pedagogy and interactive methods of teaching and learning.

The Mercy Congregation has funded a huge upgrading of the main

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