

New flag unfurling in time for Mercy Day

Founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1952, St Anne's School in Manurewa is proud of its Mercy origins.

Mercy values are displayed alongside a portrait of Catherine McAuley in the office foyer. And

from this month, a Mercy flag will fly from the school's mast, beneath the national ensign.

Professionally made, the flag depicts the internationally recognised Mercy cross on a dark blue background, flanked by two

light blue panels.

St Anne's principal, Philip Cortesi says the flag will be blessed at a Mercy Day Mass on Sep 24.

Following the Mass, he has invited former principal, Sr Frances Stewart rsm to raise the flag for the first time.

The event is one of several planned by Mercy ministries for Mercy Day later this month. Special Masses will be celebrated at Mercy colleges in several centres, and a Mercy awards ceremony will honour staff and volunteers at Atawhai Assisi Home and Hospital in Hamilton.

At Waiatarua Mercy Parklands in Ellerslie, two staff members will share with residents and colleagues highlights of their visits to Baggot Street, Dublin, earlier this year.



ST Anne's principal Philip Cortesi with his school's new flag.

Sisters and companions are expected to gather for a Mercy Day Mass on Sunday 19 Sep at St Mary's Convent in Ponsonby. The 2pm Mass will focus on Mercy's call to care for Papatuanuku and Earth's finite resources.

Te Hononga Atawhai

Mercy Focus

Volume 11 Issue 3 9 September 2010

Quality focus of hospital's audit

After three days of intense scrutiny, Mercy Hospital in Dunedin has emerged from its latest round of accreditation with flying colours.

Four Quality Health auditors noted achievements in all criteria, awarding excellence for infection control, health and safety and data management.

As well, certification requirements under the Health and Disability Services Act were also met.

The auditors were welcomed by kaumatua Albie Ellison from the Otakau Runanga, reflecting the hospital's close links with local iwi.

Input from mission coordinator Janice McDrury traced the hospital's connections with the Sisters

of Mercy and its unique role as a private surgical facility.

"The audit process was a demanding but positive experience," said Judith Vercoe, quality coordinator at Mercy Hospital.

"The auditors gave feedback as they met with staff, and offered a range of practical ideas and opportunities for ongoing improvement."

Among verbal suggestions from the auditors were more robust documentation of theatre suite cleaning and greater awareness for patients of their Code of Rights.

More recommendations may follow in the final report expected shortly.

Gains noted in the audit process include incident management, best practice approach in cultural



HOSPITAL VISIT: Mercy Ministries Trust board chairman Reuben O'Neill (left) and Congregation Leader Anne Campbell rsm, join Mercy Hospital board chairman Trevor Scott and CEO Richard Whitney during a visit last month. The board of Mercy Ministries held its August meeting in Dunedin, allowing time to meet with the hospital's board and to look over recent extensions and improvements.

matters and the introduction of a surgical safety checklist.

Future challenges include increased consumer participation.

The results reflect the commitment of senior executive and staff at Mercy Hospital, Judith Vercoe said. The audit process provides a focus for achieve-

ment, "and this result has many quietly contemplating how to gain an 'excellence' rating in the future, for their specific area of interest."

Mercy Hospital is currently looking to extend its chemotherapy services for private patients, offering them a wider range of medications and reducing their need for travel.



RELIC: A piece of Catherine McAuley's coif, on display at Mercy Centre in Epsom.

A link with Mercy's founder

A tiny piece of Catherine McAuley's coif, the white linen cap worn under her black veil, now has a place of honour in the entrance hall at Te Ngakau Waiora, the Mercy Spirituality Centre in Epsom.

The fragment was given to the centre's manager, Rita Vessey rsm, while she was on sabbatical in the United States in 1976.

While completing nursing studies there, she met Mercy archivist Sr

Seraphia in Chicago who offered her a piece of the coif. The fragment has now been mounted in a frame, beside a picture of Catherine wearing the traditional habit of the Sisters of Mercy.

A matching frame contains a piece of the original slate from the roof of Catherine's house in Baggot St, Dublin, built in 1827. The house was reroofed during extensive restorations in 1994.

Kiwi sister at home in Catherine's house

'Come home to Catherine' was how the six-day retreat was billed. For New Zealand Sister of Mercy, Sheryl James, the chance to stay in the Dublin house built by her Congregation's founder in 1827 was like a dream come true.

"The first night, I don't think I really slept at all. I lay there thinking, 'this is it - this is what I've come for!'"

Through the warm night air she could hear the sound of horses below, offering rides to people from St Stephen's Green nearby. "And I thought, 'this is how it must have been, when Catherine arranged for the horse and carriage to call at Baggot Street'."

The retreat last May was for sisters who had taken their final vows in the last two years. Sheryl's six companions were from the Philippines, Nigeria and the US.

Every day brought its highlights. A visit through city streets to the Presentation convent at George's Hill, where Catherine spent more than a year making her novitiate, was a profound experience.

"We were shown her bedroom; and honestly, all you could see from looking out was the chapel roof," Sheryl recalls.

"It must have been very hard on her, knowing there was a group of women across town carrying on with her work among the poor and sick, while she was stuck in this little room. And yet she did it, with grace-filled moments."

Other highlights included seeing Catherine's prayer book, annotated with her own handwriting, holding her ring, and kneeling at her predieu. Several sessions focused on her letters.

"A lot of these were about her

heart being centred on God and gave a real insight into her faith and trust," says Sheryl. "But her sense of humour came through, too. She was a free spirit, and was always concerned for other people."

A poignant moment was spent reliving the founder's last hours in her bedroom, then moving down the staircase with a bouquet and a candle to the garden where Catherine is buried, with the bell tolling.

Sheryl's guess is that Catherine wouldn't think much of the shrine built in the early 1900s to mark her

tening to sorrows - that's what we do at Mercy Parklands."

She sees Catherine's spirit reflected in recent initiatives at the aged care facility, like the *Spark of Life* programme for people with dementia and the *Liverpool Care Pathway*, providing special care for those who are close to death.

Sheryl's dream is to keep the spirit of Catherine alive in her work. One project is to share some of the founder's wisdom words, using small cards which can be left in the chapel for people to read.



BAGGOT ST: In front of the bronze of Catherine McAuley outside her Dublin house are Sheryl James rsm (centre) with US Sisters of Mercy Laurie Orman (left) and Pat Black.

grave. "She wasn't a person who liked to be noticed. You can't enter the garden without it striking you.

"Yet the other 50 sisters buried there are remembered only by a plaque on the wall. I think that's gone against her wishes."

Sheryl has returned to her pastoral care of older people, convinced that this is work that Catherine McAuley would certainly endorse.

"Her three things more precious than gold - the compassionate look, the kindly word and the patient lis-

"At one of our houses in England, I picked up the same card twice, telling me not to let something new within me disappear

"Catherine also insisted that we have only 15 hours in the day - from 6 to 9. Mercy people can often become workaholics. Catherine reminds us that we should have fun, as well.

"There's a need to weave her spirit into our lives. If I can keep some of that spirit hovering over Mercy Parklands, I'll be happy."

Single drops can form an ocean of change

Over 50 participants, most of them Sisters of Mercy or their partners in ministry, shared in a one-day workshop on caring for the Earth, held at St Mary's Convent, Ponsonby, last month.

Sisters engaged in individual ministries joined staff from Mercy healthcare facilities and community development ventures, along with teachers and students from Mercy colleges.

Also present were representatives from other religious Orders and diocesan departments.

Led by Katrina Fabish rsm and members of the Pou Atawhai mission team, the workshop explored ways of taking action to support Papatuanuku and its resources for present and future generations.

The programme included DVDs featuring global warming and climate change, as well as New Zealanders who have succeeded in reversing damage to the environment.

An interactive Universe Story, tracing life from its beginnings to today, was preceded by a Maori version of creation, narrated by Rangī Davis and dramatized by Ruth Tai.

The workshop aimed at increasing awareness of the planet's plight, at acknowledging the burden unfairly borne by the world's poor and by other species, and at achieving the shift in consciousness and conversion of heart that real change requires.

Sharing at the end of the day focused on practical steps already in place. These include a permaculture garden being developed by a Sister of Mercy and two disabled gardeners, and a Mercy venture in



WATER, a limited resource that needs protecting, formed focus at Earth workshop.

Waitakere, where youth at risk are learning to grow vegetables in a community garden and low-income families are being helped to make their households warmer and more efficient.

Next year, Mercy Spirituality Centre in Epsom will support the UN's *Year of the Forest*, with a winter lecture series and a spring festival exploring this theme.

Pupils from Mercy colleges expressed the hope that others from their schools could share the workshop. "It will be through education and lots of small actions that big change will come," said Emily Whitehead, a Year 12 student from St Mary's College in Ponsonby.

"I am very thankful to learn that these changes are beginning and that there are lots of like-minded people. It will be great to go back

and share the insight that all life is intertwined from stardust, and that we have a responsibility to become linked to our Earth again."

Classmate Rachel Brebner agreed. "Our generation were only children when we moved into the 21st century. We thought with our technology we were unstoppable.

"Now we see that our resources are being depleted at a rate we can barely fathom. We are charged with the responsibility to solve this problem."

Even one person becoming more environmentally friendly can make a difference, said Rachel. "An ocean starts with a single drop of water. Today, we become drops of water to form an ocean of change to aid our planet."

Organisers are hoping to offer the workshop in other venues, adapted to the needs of particular Mercy ministries or communities.



ST MARY'S students Emily Whitehead (left) and Rachel Brebner... thankful for insights.

Time at hospice affirms passion to care

* from back page

despite having to be a one-income family through that time. Though still paying off the mortgage, I have no question that my children gained from those years of unconditional love and flexibly structured days."

As the challenges of parenting and providing for families grow, Fiona wonders whether a more communal approach to living may hold answers. She points to the advantages of extended family groups, well known to Maori and Pacific cultures.

As a third-generation New Zealander, she is aware of strong connections with Aotearoa. "The land, sea and sky provide the context for my daily experiences of life.

"I think my generation has developed a growing awareness and appreciation of the relationship long held between Maori and their land."

The youngest of Fiona's three daughters is now completing her schooling at St Mary's College.

"I recognise in her the same instinct to look after those around her that

was evident among my school peers, and which led many of us into the caring professions.

"As she considers her options with no clear choice in view, I encourage her to think about what she's good at, about what stirs her, and to make a first step in that direction. I've discovered that finding your vocation may take many steps.

"Making a start is the perfect way to begin. Then you simply trust that the path will become clearer along the way."

Award for diversity to Mercy Trust

Mercy Ministries NZ Trust is among 13 New Zealand organisations to receive awards from the Human Rights Commission, recognizing their outstanding contribution to cultural diversity and race relations.

The awards were presented as part of this year's Diversity Forum, held in Christchurch last month.

On hand to receive the mounted certificate was Sister of Mercy Anne Frost, accompanied by three of her colleagues from Christchurch.

"We felt honoured and very proud to receive the award on behalf of Mercy Ministries," Sr Anne said.

"We were impressed by the passion and commitment of the groups receiving awards.

"Their determination to improve race relations in Aotearoa New Zealand was inspiring to see."



DIVERSITY AWARD: Sr Anne Frost with Australian Disability Commissioner Graeme Innes and Race Relations Commissioner Joris de Bres at the awards ceremony in Christchurch.

Over 250 organisations now take part in the Diversity Action programme, aimed at fostering and celebrating diversity throughout New Zealand. Mercy Ministries has been a participant since 2005, when Race Relations Commissioner Joris de Bres was keynote speaker at a Mercy Forum.

This year's projects included a series of talks at Mercy Spirituality Centre in Auckland, aimed at deepening interfaith understanding, with a focus on Hindu, Muslim and Jewish

perspectives, as well as Anglican-Catholic dialogue.

Carmel College in Milford marked the beginning of Matariki with a lunchtime event, led by the school's tuakana leaders. At St Mary's College, Ponsonby, a newly-formed kapa haka group led another lunchtime event to launch te Wiki o te Reo.

Around 60 new staff at Mercy Hospice Auckland are participating in Treaty workshops this year run by Mercy mission staff, highlighting commitment by the Sisters of Mercy to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Time at hospice affirms passion to care

As a pupil at St Mary's College in Ponsonby 30 years ago, Fiona Gardiner can remember stirring overnight retreats in Coolock, built by the Sisters of Mercy in the 1950s as a novitiate.

She has just spent a year on the same site, now occupied by Mercy Hospice Auckland, pursuing a fellowship in specialist palliative care nursing.

The room where she learnt piano is now an office for the hospice's Family Support team. "I can recall my dedicated teacher, Sr Mary Joan, suggesting I might one day take her place there. It's been intriguing to be back 30 years later, even in a different role."

Fiona returned to nursing in her late 30s, after years of mothering, travelling and part-time work. She spent eight years in hospital and community-based oncology at Auckland City Hospital, before applying for a fellowship in specialist palliative care nursing.

Funded by the Donny Charitable Trust, the two-year programme is also supported by Mercy Hospice Auckland, Auckland City Hospital and Auckland University.

Fiona has now begun a placement



PALLIATIVE Care nurse Fiona Gardiner with daughter Virginia Rose.. path in life becomes clearer after making the first step.

with the Palliative Care Team at ACH, and hopes to complete her fellowship with a rural team, working among Maori patients and gaining insight into their struggle to deal with cancer.

Fiona says her year at Mercy Hospice, both at the inpatient unit and in the community, proved deeply satis-

fying. "This came partly from realizing that I have finally reached a long evolving goal.

"Palliative care is a specialty about which I feel passionate, and one where I can use the skills and wisdom I've gained.

"But the expertise of the staff at Mercy Hospice, and their willingness to share it, have been inspiring. Their attitude of striving to accept unconditionally the patients they care for has left a lasting impression."

Fiona says that nursing those with a terminal illness calls for a range of skills. "You need an ability to communicate, a curiosity about who people are, and a sound knowledge that will help them to achieve what's important to them.

"A patient's door is almost always open to a nurse – more so than to any other health professional. We're seen as an ally, and are often trusted with the story that is central to caring for someone facing illness and dying."

Balancing a career with mothering has meant a constant reassessing of priorities, says Fiona.

"I was very clear about being with my children in their early years,

**turn to page 3*