



Newsletter - Issue 25

September 2008

Enlightening Article in Metro Magazine

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We urge you to read the outstanding 9-page article featuring one of our Dreamers, Mosa'ati Mafileo, and his family in the August issue of Auckland's "Metro" magazine entitled "Low Wages, High Hopes"

www.ihaveadream.org.nz/newseventsmedia.htm

The article provides a fascinating inside-view of what life is truly like in many of our Dreamers' family homes.



It is a sharp rejoinder to the many critics who often label the type of people we work with as "the underclass." People of different ethnicities or different colours are called "benefit bludgers," "lazy," "gangsters" and many other derogatory and racial terms by mainstream society. Your eyes will be opened as you read what life is really like week in and week out for them as they struggle against their multiple hardships, yet remain steadfast in the pursuit of their dreams.

Politicians, parents and educators must all note Kilifi Mafileo's insightful comment: "In NZ, life without education is hopeless." This is a relatively recent change in our country, so it is wonderful to have a migrant from a developing country express this new truth with such clarity.

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Video on the "Power of Mentoring"

Loni Kerrigan is in her 3rd year of a Bachelor of Communication Studies at AUT (Auckland University of Technology). She led a team of students in producing a 10-minute video on the "I Have a Dream" project, as part of their class requirements. We asked Loni to focus on the mentoring relationship, as we see this as integral to the success of our programme.

Loni and her team did a fantastic job of capturing the essence and power of mentoring, with a focus on Brendan McFadden and Saeli Alatasi. They told an important story in a very clear and concise manner, with a great blend of interviews, personal stories and visual impressions. We have loaded this video onto our web site www.ihaveadream.org.nz/newseventsmedia.htm

The main credits for the video (in case you're looking for talented students about to graduate!) are:

Director/Editor: Loni Kerrigan

Camera: Nadine Newman-Dempster, Faye Lowrey, Caleb Allison, Meghan Synott and Fahad Hussain

Sound: Freda Gomez, Faye Lowrey, Aja Lethaby, Meghan Synott and Fahad Hussain.

Mid-Winter Christmas Party

The Dreamers once again put on a fantastic event for their community, hosting a party for all the kids in the neighbourhood under the age of five. As you can see in these photos, the youngsters were treated to face-painting, games, food, and meeting Santa (including gifts!).

Parents of the kids that benefited from this community service event were fulsome in their praise. It's great to see our Dreamers work so hard to create and deliver this occasion to give back to others.



"Our Street"

McKayla Pulu is working her way towards her dream of becoming an actress. She trained for 6 months with a community group to put on a fantastic performance called "Our Street" at the Auckland Town Hall. This review sums it up well (please note that McKayla is one of the three children from McGehan Close – see the article in our newsletter # 19):

Deep in Auckland's inner city beats a vibrant multi-ethnic heart and this is what "Our Street" celebrates. The Wesley, Mt Roskill, Mt Albert and Blockhouse Bay area of the city can list at least 80 different ethnic groups and if you believe some accounts, the place is in constant tension and war. "Our Street" is a musical/play that sets out to tell a simple story about the neighbourhood. It's all put together by the different ethnic groups involved and revolves around two weddings. One is a Samoan-Maori wedding and all its complexities; the other is an Indian wedding - between a Punjabi and a South Indian.

The Polynesian-Indian parallels worked well and for the full house at the Auckland Town Hall, there were enough ethnic jokes for everybody to get. Others move through "Our Street"; Papua New Guineans, Ethiopians and Somalians, various European groups and assorted Asian groupings, led by the India-New Zealand theatre group Prayas. Although mostly a joyful celebration, the outcome is poignant and unhappy. The Polynesian-Maori wedding had a sharpness to it that rings true.

"Our Street" had original music, reflecting the multi-ethnic nature of the play. There were some very strong moments. The team had also shot a small film in the streets of the neighbourhood and as snatches of it were shown, a Tongan solo flautist played a poignant piece. A refugee woman played the piano and in another scene, another told of her hopes for her children.

The children - including three from McGehan Close (made famous by National Party leader John Key) - were marvellous. Their enthusiasm and raw promise shone through. There is something uniquely Auckland to see a young Indian girl performing a Polynesian dance; and Auckland PI kids doing Bollywood.

What is remarkable about the play is the way the Auckland City Council led the way and worked it up over the last year, partly in response to perceived problems about the area. One of those involved, Anina McKenzie wrote in the programme notes: "The play is about how it is okay to change, how sometimes our family's dreams aren't the same as our dreams, and how neighbours might be nosy and want to have a free feed but they also want to feel like they are part of something."

The resulting play is highly political but in a pure way, free of party politics. It's about trying to define what our Auckland is, and how it could be in future.

DIVERSE PLAY: Ana Loholoho 10, Hala Huakau 13 and McKayla Pulu 13, from McGehan Close in Mt Roskill who are cast members of *Our Street*.



SPARKLE and the Dreamer Band

For the *After School Programme* on Tuesdays, we have implemented a SIG (special interest group) session. This was designed to encourage the Dreamers to pursue something that really "floated their boat" but which might not fit into the ordinary tutoring, homework assistance and remedial learning focus of our weekday sessions. We are pleased to report on the progress of two groups that have really stepped up and taken advantage of this opportunity:

1. The School of Engineering at Auckland University have organised a group of female students to come to the Dreamer Centre every week to get some of our female Dreamers hooked on science, maths and engineering. They are conducting fun experiments and posing challenging puzzles to the Dreamers, which is having the desired effect of making learning fun and rewarding. Luckily, none of the experiments involving flammable gas have gone awry yet, but there have been some nervous moments!

2. Shannon and her friend Warren are helping some of the Dreamer boys to build up a band. Siaosi, Mosa, Mini, Saeli, Luke, Sofe, Dwayne, and Antoni are working hard to build on their great musical abilities. So far they've got together 3 songs and are now looking for opportunities to show off their rock star talents!



Dreamers May Wuatai and Raela Varu test out the group's Hot Air Balloon!



Go-Carting and Paintball

We've had two fun weekend activities this school term. In both cases, it has been interesting to see normally mild-mannered people (both kids and adults) display an amazingly aggressive alter ego once they get onto the racetrack or the battlefield.. ☺

Another Backhouse Joins the Team

Congratulations to Ant and Nina on the birth of their fourth child, Millie-Louise. She arrived on July 11th, weighing 8lbs, to be warmly welcomed by her excited siblings and exhausted parents.

We're not exactly sure how Ant managed to have four children during the past 5 years of running the "I Have a Dream" project, but Nina assures us that he was closely involved. Maybe they're working on a rugby team?



"I Have a Dream" Goes to Parliament

Congratulations also to Peseta Sam Lotu-liga, who has been mentoring Dreamer Sofe Nofoa. Sam earned a BCom/LLB and MCom (Hons) from Auckland University and an MBA from Cambridge, had a successful career in law and business, and is currently serving as an Auckland City Councillor.

Sam was placed at #35 on the National Party's Candidate List, which means that he is almost certain to be elected to serve in Parliament at the elections due before the end of the year. Sam will be just the second Pasifika MP (he was born in Samoa) for the National Party, and will serve as a great example of where hard work, focus and commitment can take you.

We have hosted a large number of MPs at the Dreamer Centre, so it's great to be sending "one of ours" to Wellington. If anyone wants to help Sam canvas in his Maungakiekie electorate, please contact him at 021-492-994 or sam.lotu-liga@national.org.nz



Do you have what it takes to be a PC (Project Coordinator)?

We noticed this paragraph below in an article on "Mediation and Faith" in the July 5th Economist magazine.

Faith-based mediation often involves putting to work in hard secular places the virtues that at least some religious people possess:

- *Discretion*
- *Modesty*
- *Empathy*
- *A non-judgmental cast of mind*
- *An ability to overcome cultural barriers*

It sums up the essential qualities that enable Ant Backhouse to succeed so admirably in his long-term quest to be a positive force in the lives of 53 Dreamers. It also describes the values that Lynn Su'a brings to our project as the Mentor Coordinator, and indeed the many wonderful volunteers that provide so much time, energy and love to these young people.

We're not saying that these personal qualities are limited to "people of faith," or that everyone in an "I Have a Dream" project is out there proselytizing their beliefs. Rather, it seems that the rewards we all get from our involvement with activities and groups that are larger than ourselves are a nice antidote to the pressures of consumerism and selfishness so prevalent in today's society.

Volunteer Profile - Sad Loss of Dedicated Parent Volunteer

The entire "I Have a Dream" family suffered a huge loss when Cecelia Nicholas, mother of Dreamer, Jade, died on July 3rd. Cecelia had been a tireless supporter and promoter of everything that we have done over the past 5 years, hardly slowing down at all even as her illness advanced this year. She has been suffering from asthma for many years, and in a rare and aggressive form of the disease, it progressed rapidly this year to take her from us, at the tender age of 51.

The whole community rallied around her family, and Ant demonstrated the extra miles that a Project Coordinator goes to by practically moving into the home for a few days to help out the family and organize the funeral. In a demonstration of her commitment to the power of education to help her children, Cecelia decided to be buried in her blue "I Have a Dream" t-shirt rather than her traditional Cook Island dress. In fact, the Church was filled with the blue t-shirts, as all of the Dreamers and their families "flew the flag" to recognize Cecelia's huge zest and enthusiasm for life, her daughters and the "I Have a Dream" programme.



Jade and her two sisters, Cindy and Grace, are going to live with their cousin, Apii, who is another strong supporter and volunteer with the "I Have a Dream" project.

We usually focus our Volunteer Profile on the external recruits to the "I Have a Dream" project, but Cecelia's death and Apii's ongoing commitment remind us that the families are the original and most important "volunteers" of all.

Quote of The Day

What we are trying to do may just be a drop in the ocean, but the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.- Mother Teresa

"The "I Have a Dream"® Programme helps children from low-income areas reach their education and career goals by providing a long-term program of mentoring, tutoring, and enrichment, with an assured opportunity for higher education."