



## Newsletter - Issue 30

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### Contents

<i>TEDx Auckland</i>	1
<i>Dreamer Stars in "Precious"</i>	1
<i>Great article in The NZ LISTENER</i>	1
<i>Huge Successes at Dreamer School Camp</i>	2
<i>Teacher Quality, Student Assessment etc</i>	3
<i>Experience Corps</i>	3
<i>Funding</i>	4
<i>Volunteer Profile</i>	4
<i>Quote of the Day</i>	4

This issue contains a lot of valuable information. Please take the time to download the articles referenced, especially the one from The Atlantic. The speech at TEDx also raises important questions about the future of our society.

### *TEDx Auckland*

"Ideas worth spreading" is the simple yet powerful goal of the TED conferences. If you've not heard about them, please go to [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com) and see what the buzz is about.

The TED story has spread around the world since it started in Monterey, CA in 1984, and late in 2009 it came to NZ. The "I Have a Dream" programme was invited to present our story, so please have a look at the video on our web site, [www.ihaveadream.org.nz](http://www.ihaveadream.org.nz). Also included are the research papers that we referenced in the speech.

### *Dreamer Stars in "Precious"*

We are excited to share that one of our very own "Dreamers" has made it to the big screen! Stephanie Andujar, a Dreamer from the Chelsea-Elliott program in New York City, appears in the Academy Award-nominated film *Precious*, based on the novel "Push" by Sapphire.



*Far Right: Stephanie Andujar*

The film tells the story of Precious, a 16-year-old girl who overcomes tremendous odds and, with the help of her friends and teachers, finds the beauty and sense of possibility that lies within.

Stephanie, whose ambition since childhood has been to become an actress, impressed the director so much during her audition that she was offered the role of Rita, Precious's friend, on the spot. Stephanie (*above, right*) sat down with the "I Have a Dream" programme to talk about her role in the movie and how she managed to earn her college degree while filming a major motion picture. You can see the interview at:

[www.ihaveadreamfoundation.org/html/sandujar.htm](http://www.ihaveadreamfoundation.org/html/sandujar.htm)

### *Great Article in The NZ LISTENER*

There was a great article about our project in the March 6-12 issue of *The Listener*, which is attached to this newsletter, and on our web site.

It's probably a good thing that the journalist, Becky Macfie, misheard me, and called it the "Lucky Spoon Club" that we're all part of. What I really said to her was "Lucky Sperm Club." Maybe it was just her doing a good job of cleaning up my language for a family-oriented magazine ... ☺

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## *Huge Successes at Dreamer School Camp*



The 19 Dreamers that attended camp from April 12-16 accomplished two significant achievements:

1. They ALL made it across the demanding 19.4km long Tongariro Crossing, which is rated the best one day walk in the world. It was a day of meeting challenges – including getting over some initial apathy about the walk, possibly influenced by the early 6.30am start! Coach Ant compared this “walk” to their life journey, and used this metaphor to encourage them during the tramp. The first steep climb, up the appropriately named Devil’s Staircase, was their journey through High School. An hour later, lashed by strong winds and rain, they’re clambering up the steep and narrow path to the Red Crater – this represented their university years. After a steep descent to the beautiful Emerald Lakes (where just about everyone ended up on their posterior at some stage!), there were still 4 hours to go, including another short climb, which meant that their life of marriage, family, friends and career would still require effort, commitment and perseverance.

Some of the Dreamers faced real challenges on this walk, and it was awesome to see how they pulled together and supported each other. This included:

- yelling out encouragement to help a Dreamer finding the steep terrain physically challenging
- coming back down the steep and narrow path between the craters to help a Dreamer overcome their fear of heights
- waiting in freezing temperatures until the whole group was back together before continuing on with the rest of the walk

The Dreamers achieved so much that day. For most of them it was the highest they had ever been (1900 metres above sea level!), the longest they had ever walked (8 hours!), and possibly the coldest they had ever been! But it may also have been amongst their biggest adventures, and it gave the Dreamers, and the helpers, a fantastic sense of achievement.

2. The theme for camp was each Dreamer writing an essay or speech, entitled “My Life, My Story, My Dream,” according to the guidelines for NCEA Level One English. We were extremely fortunate to have three wonderful men volunteer to come down to camp for two days to coach the Dreamers on creative writing:

- Tainui Tukiwaho is the artistic Director and co owner of SmackBang Theatre Company, as well as being a professional actor for screen and theatre.
- Albert Belz is a professional writer for theatre and screen.
- Gerald Urquhart is a professional actor, and is currently a drama teacher at Mount Albert Grammar.

On the final night of camp, all 19 Dreamers read out their stories to the other Dreamers and the camp helpers. It was clear that a huge amount of effort and thought had been put into the stories – they were emotional and powerful statements on their families, successes, fears and hopes. Many tears were shed during this three hour session! So as well as practising valuable written and spoken English skills, the Dreamers seemed to get the most out of the exercise on a personal growth level by really examining their own lives – where they have come from, where they are at and where they are heading – sharing their stories with their peers, and listening to, and supporting, other Dreamers and their life stories. The stories were recorded on video which will be fascinating for the Dreamers to look back at in the years to come.

Now we need to organise another camp, so that we can include the stories – and a tramping success – for the 20+ Dreamers that are still living in Auckland, but couldn’t attend this camp.



NOTE: Special thanks to Ben England, Aaron's mentor, who not only attended the full week camp, but also supplied heaps of food from his employer (Heinz Watties). We had the Dreamers prepare all the meals for this tramp, which not only saved us a heap of money, but was also good team building. Thanks.....



## *Teacher Quality, Student Assessment, etc.*

Much has been written about the Government's introduction of National Standards into schools in NZ. It rapidly spills over to the issues of teacher quality, school ranking, social equity, political bias, etc. Many other countries have gone through similar debates, with perhaps the best known being the NCLB (No Child Left Behind) Act in the USA.

We found this article [www.theatlantic.com/doc/print/201001/good-teaching](http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/print/201001/good-teaching) to be a good summary of the issues, and a clear outline of the required response.

As we stated in the TEDx speech (*refer page 1*), a Kiwi (Professor John Hattie) is leading the way globally with data proving that teacher quality is the single biggest determinant of a child's educational success.

We have visited some of the best-performing charter schools in the US (e.g., the Democracy Now and KIPP schools in NYC), and been extremely impressed with their mission and ethos to bring outstanding education opportunities to ALL children. A large part of their success is this awesome TFA (Teach For America) programme. The founder of TFA, Wendy Kopp, has written a book of her experience: "*One Day, All Children...: The Unlikely Triumph Of Teach For America And What I Learned Along The Way*".

Another fantastic book is "*Work Hard. Be Nice*" by Jay Matthews. It tells the inspiring story of how two TFA graduates went on to found the KIPP Charter School Programme, which is revolutionising American education.

## *Experience Corps*

If there's anything we've learned in the 7 years to date of our project, it's the power and potential that caring adults have when they get involved in the lives of kids. We've often said that it's our many volunteers (especially the tutors and mentors) that make our programme so successful.

We've also often wondered if this model could be easily extended to other schools throughout the country. After all, we've merely recognised and taken advantage of a number of realities:

1. Many people realise that there are some social and economic problems in society, and that reaching young kids is the best way to deal with them.
2. These people not only see the issues, but they would love to be able to get involved in their resolution.
3. Teaching today is a high pressure occupation, with a single adult having to teach to a large group of active children. Some schools have much higher needs than others, such as large numbers of ESL students, higher levels of social deprivation, etc.
4. School grounds and buildings are only used for approximately 7 - 9 hours a day. This means that a significant resource is under-utilised.

So, we were very excited to read an article about this group, [www.experiencecorps.org](http://www.experiencecorps.org), in a US-based education newsletter we subscribe to. It seems to us that this model could be easily adapted to NZ, with multiple benefits.

## Funding

We've touched on the fact that, like many families, non-profits and companies, our investment portfolio was damaged by the Global Financial Crisis. This has resulted in our annual income being cut almost in half. So we have reluctantly had to submit funding requests to some of the grant-making charities, as we haven't wanted to cut back too drastically on our staffing levels or programme offerings, especially with the Dreamers at this critical stage of their schooling and social development.

So you can imagine our huge joy and relief when we received a cheque from the Lotteries Commission. This has closed almost half of our shortfall for this year, which is fantastic news. We only need funding support through to the end of 2012, as the Dreamers will be going to university then, so we can reduce operational costs and start to draw down on our capital.



## Volunteer Profile

We've usually focused on the long term volunteers that serve the programme so well, especially through their commitment to be an enduring part of the lives of our Dreamers. However, we're also blessed to have a broad network of people that know about our project, and are always looking to bring additional resources to bear, or are willing to help us by reaching out to their networks.

Our recent Dreamer School Camp was a great example. In our search for people to help the Dreamers write their stories, we reached out to all the people that have written about us, or that we knew worked in the media. Tapu Misa is a fantastic columnist for the NZ Herald newspaper, whom we quoted in the lead article in Issue 23 of our newsletter. Given that it was the school holidays and she has her own family to care for, she was unable to help, but she recommended a drama group that she'd seen training kids at a local High School. We contacted Sam Scott, the Director of this group (Massive Company), but they were already booked for training school groups in the holidays. Sam sent an email to her network, introducing us and our needs. One of the recipients was Tainui Tukiwaho, who recruited two of his friends, as outlined in the earlier story.

Tainui, Albert and Gerald were incredibly generous with their time and talents. They not only drove 5 hours each way to be with us at camp and worked enthusiastically with the kids for three sessions over two days, but they also had to endure a rather interrupted sleep as 19 teenagers enjoyed the freedom of school camp in the mountains with no parents around .... 😊

We are so grateful to them for their generosity, and to Tapu and Sam for making the introductions. It's often said that all Kiwis are connected by just two degrees of separation, and now we know it's true!



*From Left: Gerald, Tainui and Albert work with our Dreamers*



## Quote of The Day

**Our greatest natural resource is the minds of our children.**

- Walt Disney

"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."