

Te Aroha Noa Community Services



Te Aroha Noa believes that there is more to people than people see about themselves. Its vision is to “unleash the potential of all people(s)”.

Te Aroha Noa has been working with, and in, the community of Highbury for over twenty five years, beginning when Palmerston North’s Central Baptist Church leased some space in Highbury to offer some counselling services - it wanted to translate its concern into action.

How did it happen?

Since the beginning Te Aroha Noa aimed to be an inclusive and responsive place that supports local people. It took an asset-based, strengths-based approach. A key enabling factor is Te Aroha Noa’s strong belief that the community is enormously resourceful.

The goal was to grow ‘an entity that was a seamless web of relationships’, rather than an ‘organisation that employs staff to work with clients’.

Over time, Te Aroha Noa has grown into a hub that hosts a huge range of activities and services; playgroups, an early childhood centre, community building and community development, teen parents centre, work with disengaged youth, family and individual counselling, adult learning centre, aerobic and fitness programmes, craft group, events and more.

Te Aroha Noa has supported many inspirational local initiatives including the rejuvenation of Farnham Park alongside Local residents, the Palmerston North City Council and Housing New Zealand; He Ngākau Mātua (young parents learning centre) which focuses on the holistic development of parents through parenting skills, life skills, self-discovery and academic studies with an emphasis on personal development; The Violence Free Community Project focused on creating community-level conversations. It harnessed the energy and expertise of local people (community consultants) who developed the project with Te Aroha staff – shifting the cultural norms of “don’t nark on your neighbour”, into “standing up for our children.”



Te Aroha Noa has a huge range of activities



Growing a seamless web of relationships



Supports many local initiatives

Change in communities takes time. Te Aroha Noa worked
with the community for 15+ years to develop trust and pride.



What has changed?

Bruce Maden, Chief Executive Officer, has been there from the beginning. He reflects on some of the changes that he has noticed:

- Highbury is now described as a place of heart, unity, safety and whānau. It is seen as an innovative place with a strong sense of community.
- There has been a drop in offending and crime.
- Physical changes reflect community changes. In particular, with residents leadership Farnham Park has transformed, it is equipped with a new BBQ, new Gazebo, limestone running track. People play touch rugby at the park. It is now a gathering place for children, families, local residents.



What's been learned

- Change in communities takes time. Te Aroha Noa worked with the community for 15+ years to develop trust and pride. It was important to build a positive identity before tackling the harder issues of violence and disengaged youth.
- Active reciprocity is key. Te Aroha Noa sees families as competent and able to contribute to their community, as well as receive, support and resources.
- The importance of building relationships. Collaborative relationships with government agencies have been key to many of Te Aroha Noa's projects. It's known for being constructive but that takes perseverance. Some of the work, such as He Ngākau Nao and He Ngākau Toa programmes, were the results of six plus years of relationship building.
- Being an outsider wanting to do community development was hard at first. You have to break down the barriers. A church coming in and buying property and running services. People are initially suspicious. You have to be present and trustworthy to gain people's approval.

For more information about Child Rich Communities visit
everychildcounts.org.nz/resources%2BIndex/Community+led+development

If you would like to know more please contact: bruce.maden@infogen.net.nz

www.tearohanoa.org.nz