



The Matura Youth Trust

Initiative: Matura
Theme Working Together in Place

“I want a place that children can come and be children, it has to be safe and fun” said Garry Coates, spokesman for the Matura Youth Trust in 2011. He and other like minded family oriented people had already set about doing just that.

The Matura Youth Trust is a group of local people wanting to provide a space for Matura Youth. They set about creating this by purchasing the old Town Hall from Gore District Council in 2008 for \$1. Unfortunately the roof of this building needed to be replaced. With an estimated cost of \$10,000 to complete, this was the first hurdle for the group to clear and being a new group the Youth Trust did not yet qualify for funding. Not to be deterred, by 2011 the members of the Youth Trust had completed and installed a new roof (at their own cost).

This kind of attitude helped steer the group through the bureaucracy required to open a public facility too. Somewhat frustrated, but knowing that working together gets things done more effectively (and sometimes faster too!), one of the committee enlisted the services of our local Youthlink to navigate the paperwork. The Youthlink specialist, youth worker and community development coordinator all meet with the Youth Trust to develop a way forward.

After reviewing what documentation was needed, the external agencies also outlined the perils of working with youth and what potential issues may arise. A timely and apt reminder came from the local Youth Trust leaders , “We understand the rules but we don’t want to base all our decisions and operation around what might go wrong. Can you show us an easy and solid way to achieve the admin required so we can get this space open to our teenagers?”

The Youth Trust recognised that systems exist for good reason and they did not want to contravene these, but they were equally determined that the systems did not block them from achieving their goal. Working with local specialists enabled them to develop ways of working with the systems without compromising their goal.

By identifying which safety and labour rules require continual monitoring and isolating the 'one off' occurrences it was determined quickly which legislation the Youth Trust needed to be trained to complete. Asking questions of authorities and requesting support to meet both the needs of the public and legislative requirements ensured outcomes that meet everyone's needs.

Working to their strengths, the youth-link specialist created easy to use templates for the group whilst the community development coordinator completed the council administration that was required for opening to the public. This enabled the Youth Trust to continue to prepare the space for our local youth.

The grand opening came in February 2011 with the entire Youth Trust and their families in attendance smiling but tired and surrounded by happy, loud laughing children. [was Now open' to our community 3 afternoons a week, the 'Bunker' offers after school space for teenagers arriving home via buses from our local high schools. It also hosts a family night on Fridays to encourage the entire family unit to come. The Bunker houses a café, 5 internet stations free of charge, a gym, pool tables, table tennis, Wii, Xbox and a huge music system for our youth to enjoy, play and just hang out in a safe but fun space.

The Bunker is also used by several other local groups, free of charge. Al-Anon, ICONZ and the local Gore District Council Youth Council for Youth Week have all benefitted from the use of the facility. As well, the Youth Trust has run a very successful holiday week program in January 2012. Over 50 children participated at no charge in workshops such as modelling & self esteem and 4wd &. These are all things that simply did not happen before the Bunker was made available [yes

Since the opening the building has continued to be restored to ensure its safety and so that users can make best use of its facilities. Discounted goods have helped to complete the painting of the building's exterior and to renovate the stage area and operational funding has been secured too. It's not all plain sailing now though. The Mataura Youth Trust is entirely voluntary and currently faces issues such as difficulties in operating during the afternoons due to volunteer availability (although has used this as a platform to recruit more helpers). Parents are now beginning to volunteer during busy farming periods to assist the trust to ensure adult supervision is available.

Even so, the refurbished building is much valued and the Bunker has become yet another proud service offered to the community of Mataura created and operated by the citizens of Mataura. Creating this space has brought the whole community together through a focus on our children. Now, on a Friday night church leaders interact alongside local gang leaders at the Bunker. Children are laughing and playing with one another and their caregivers, while caregivers get to chat with people they may never have spoken with before. All sorts of connections are being made. And the ultimate goal for the Youth Trust Chairman, Jorgen Hansen: "I would like to see a future Prime Minister of New Zealand come from here".

Intent:

To create a safe, fun place for teenagers and children in Mataura.

Key Learnings

- Having a vision for local kids inspires hope and moves beyond being constrained by what is, or has been.
- Being clear on the vision but being flexible to achieve the outcomes allowed the Youth Trust to work with existing systems yet still achieve their aims.
- Using gaps as a strength: being unable to operate in the afternoons encouraged community conversations about recruitment of new volunteers which...
- Consultants/Outsiders need to listen to the lead group and work with what they want and are already doing. Nobody has all the answers and professionals can sometimes create new barriers rather than opening new pathways.
- Lead by example – this is yet another Mataura group that rolled up its sleeves and got on with it.

Key Outcomes

- A youth space that is full of what they asked for, not what adults thought they should have.
- Stronger community connections between youth and our community as a whole as well as between various organisations and organisers of the Bunker.
- Demonstration of active listening to youth and respecting their opinion to encourage repeat behaviour at a community level
- Respect of diversity through children – Church leaders interact alongside local gang leaders at the Bunker; everyone letting children be children

Key contact

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Reference

http://digital.theensign.co.nz/olive/ode/ens_daily/Default.aspx?href=ENS%2F2012%2F02%2F29&pageno=5&view=document

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