

AUTUMN 2023

# Āwhina

PRESBYTERIAN SUPPORT SOUTHLAND MAGAZINE

## INSIDE

### Positive Change

A welcome change for two of Invercargill's newest migrant nurse recruits.

## PLUS

The Christmas spirit of giving is still very much alive and well in Southland.

CBD art panels are given a new lease on life.

We proudly welcome our Pou Tohutohu Ahurea Māori cultural advisor.



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# Kia ora koutou

I am thrilled to have started my journey with PSS. It has been a very warm welcome from the outset.



One month into the role, and the term whirlwind seems appropriate. It is hard to believe that by the time you are reading this, autumn will have arrived.

You may have noticed we have updated the design of our quarterly communications. As we took the step to redesign the magazine to make it more contemporary and engaging for our readers, we felt it was also time to update the name to reflect our diverse stakeholders, including clients, staff, and funders all of whom share the same collective vision of making a difference in our community. *Āwhina* means to help and assist, and importantly aligns with our PSS mission of caring, enabling and supporting our community. We hope you enjoy the new look.

The past few weeks for me has been focussed on getting out and around our organisation, meeting staff and residents, and getting to know our facilities. I have really enjoyed these visits and have learnt a lot along the way. My focus for the coming weeks will be to continue my voyage of discovery to ensure I have a thorough understanding of our organisation,

the critical services we provide, and our people who make it all possible.

2023 is already proving to be an eventful year. We have a new Prime Minister and Minister of Health, and an election looming large later in the year. The cost of living continues to be a concern for many, and economic commentators warn of a challenging year ahead with falling consumer spending, increasing unemployment and increased pressure across the board. The implications of these rising costs will no doubt be many and varied for our community. As an organisation dedicated to assisting our community, we will be monitoring the impacts of these challenges closely, both in a bid to assist where we can, but to also advocate to funding agencies on behalf of those most in need.

Lastly, while we've been fortunate to have had a long, hot and dry summer in the south, our thoughts remain with those impacted by the devastating effects of Cyclone Gabrielle – many of whom are family, friends, or colleagues.

**Matt Russell**  
PSS chief executive



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# *This Issue...*

**2.**

## **CEO reflects**

A very warm welcome from the outset.

---

**4.**

## **Christmas wrap**

The Christmas spirit of giving is still very much alive and well in Southland.

---

**6.**

## **Art on display**

CBD art panels are given a new lease on life.

---

**8.**

## **Positive change**

A welcome change for two of Invercargill's newest migrant nurse recruits.

---

**10.**

## **A listening ear**

Meet Enliven Southland's new pastoral care coordinator Shirley Keen.

---

**12.**

## **Giving back**

Gemma Wells-Todd is a Big Buddy who is determined to give back.

---

**13.**

## **Food rescue**

Our partnership with KiwiHarvest helps families put food on the table in increasingly difficult times.

**14.**

## **Te Haerenga**

We proudly welcome our Pou Tohutohu Ahurea Māori cultural advisor Michelle Ryland.

# Christmas Wrap

## The Christmas spirit of giving is still very much alive and well in Southland.

Despite the rising cost of living, Southlanders dug deep to support Family Works' Christmas appeals, ensuring families in need were able to enjoy the festive season.

"Once again, we were blown away with the support and generosity of businesses and individuals around Southland," Christmas hamper coordinator Tammy Honotapu said.

"To be able to take some pressure

off our families allows them to enjoy Christmas that wee bit more."

Family Works provided 51 food hampers to families it supported last year thanks to its generous supporters.

These included PWFP Fire Safety, GWD Toyota, Focus Technology, Asaleo Care Ltd, Fonterra, Majestic Horse Floats LP, Richmond Grove Presbyterian Church, Malloch

McClellan, Sanitarium Health Food Company NZ, Goodman Fielder, Chadderton & Associates, Finance Now, Regal Flooring, First Church Women's Group, Heather Robinson and Rotary clubs.

Tammy said Family Works had received some wonderful feedback from the families who received the hampers.

"I'd been dreading Christmas for months. Thank you for helping take the pressure off and bringing a little bit of magic to our home this Christmas. We're so grateful," a Christmas hamper recipient said.



Family Works Family Start Programme team leader Karen Willis (right) thanks H&J Smith Secret Santa Robyn Colvin for her support.

The community also got behind the annual Christmas Gift Appeal.

Family Works manager Irene Te Koeti said the team had been overwhelmed by the generosity of the community, which resulted in more than 580 gifts for children and teens.

“Many children have benefited, and many families have been really happy going into Christmas having had some of the pressure eased,” she said.

A special mention needs to be made to our partners The Hits – Southland 98.8FM and Bayleys Southland Real Estate for their support of the gift appeal.

A big thank you also to Pam and Sonya Wilson of Kiwi Christmas Books, who donated 500 beautiful new children’s books, and the various Rotary clubs and businesses for their support, including Focus Technology,



McIntyre Dick, Aon New Zealand, Findex and BDO Invercargill.

Focus general manager Brendon McDermott said – “as a locally-owned IT business we believe in our community, and it’s well-being is important to us.”

“That’s why we’re proud to support Presbyterian Support Southland and get behind the annual Family Works Christmas Appeal each year to support those that need a bit of extra support at Christmas. Everyone deserves to enjoy the joy Christmas brings and we’re pleased that we can play our part in making that happen.”

For about 10 years, staff at H&J Smith have erected a Secret Santa Tree in the Invercargill department store to collect gifts for families involved in Family Works’ Family Start programme.

Family Start staff submitted a list to H&J Smith, with the ages and genders of children they were working with. The public was then able to purchase gifts anonymously for children who would otherwise have missed out.

Thanks to the generosity of the store’s shoppers and staff, 145 presents were gifted to Family Start families last year.

Robyn Colvin of H&J Smith said – “I love being the Secret Santa and knowing H&Js is supporting these families who through no fault of their own can’t afford to buy Christmas presents.”

Family Works Family Start team leader Karen Willis said over the years Robyn had been amazing with her time and energy coordinating the Secret Santa tree for the Family Start Programme.

“We are so grateful to be the recipients of the H&J Smith tree,” Karen said.

Family Works managers Irene Te Koeti and Kris Wallis said they were grateful for the support for the Christmas appeals.

“Once again, thank you to everyone who gave so generously,” Irene said.

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“I'd been dreading Christmas for months. Thank you for helping take the pressure off and bringing a little bit of magic to our home this Christmas. We're so grateful.”

- gift recipient

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Abby (left) and Liv from The Hits - Southland 98.8FM, The Hits listener Eddie Lennon (11) of Makarewa School and PSS marketing manager Andrei Robertson celebrate the hundreds of gifts donated to the annual Family Works Christmas Gift Appeal.

# Art on display

Art panels which had once surrounded the Invercargill CBD development have been given a new lease on life for the benefit of Southlanders living with dementia.

A selection of the art panels have been repurposed as vibrant fencing along the northern border of Presbyterian Support Southland (PSS) Enliven’s dementia garden at Peacehaven, adding colour and interest to the space.

Last year, Enliven revamped the garden with funding from Perpetual Guardian – the Stewart Family Charitable Trust and James Stewart Memorial Fund. A large wooden deck had been built to give access into the garden and walkway area, complete with new outdoor furniture. This has provided a safe,

inviting and stimulating outdoor environment for residents and their families to enjoy.

PSS property and procurement manager Mark Dowling said when he found out the art panels had become surplus to requirements, he thought installing some of them around the garden would not only further enhance the space, but also give an opportunity for the amazing artworks to be enjoyed by the staff, residents and their families.

“I wanted to make the space interesting and quirky, and paintings are something our dementia patients

can identify with.”

He approached Invercargill Central, which then reached out to the artists, who agreed to donate panels to the project.

The panels had been installed with some blank ones scattered amongst them, providing an opportunity for residents and staff to create their own designs.

“We have some very talented artists working with us in our dementia unit,” he said.

Mark was proud of what had been achieved in making the garden

Invercargill Central marketing manager Rebecca Sheppard (left), Peacehaven Care Home manager Ronette Bolivar and PSS property and procurement manager Mark Dowling view the newly-installed art panels in the gardens of Peacehaven.





Some of the CBD art panels now on display in Peacehaven's dementia garden

"I wanted to make the space interesting and quirky, and paintings are something our dementia patients can identify with."

more accessible and inviting for the residents.

"It is having a positive impact on the quality of our residents lives."

Peacehaven Village manager Ronette Bolivar thanked Invercargill Central for its support for the project.

Residents and staff had used the garden much more since the new deck and garden area had been developed, and the addition of the

panels had given the space colour and life, she said.

Invercargill Central marketing manager Rebecca Sheppard was pleased the panels had been utilised.

"It is so great to see a second life for these panels for such a great cause," she said.

"We are very thankful and excited that they are here."

The initial concept to invite the community to decorate the panels around the perimeter of the CBD development was proposed by the Neighbouring Retail Group (NRG).

The project received an overwhelmingly positive response from the community, with more than 150 schools, community groups and individual artists taking part in creating more than 250 panels.

## Do you have a heart for people and want to make a difference?

We are looking for registrations of interest for care worker, social worker, family whānau and maintenance roles across our organisation.

To find out more and to get in touch, visit [www.pss.org.nz](http://www.pss.org.nz) or email [jobs@pss.org.nz](mailto:jobs@pss.org.nz).



# Positive change

Swapping high-pressured hospital roles for the intensive care of Invercargill’s elderly has been a welcome change for two of Invercargill’s newest migrant nurse recruits.

Husband and wife Mark and Monaliza (Mona) Cordero are highly skilled nurses.

Before moving to New Zealand, Mona had worked as a nurse in a hospital emergency department in the Philippines and Saudi Arabia. Mark had worked as an operating room nurse in a Filipino government hospital for 11 years.

They moved to Invercargill in July last year to work in Enliven’s Peacehaven Village care home, Mark in the Iona dementia unit and Mona in the hospital wing.

They are among dozens of nurses employed by Enliven last year following a targeted recruitment drive to address the significant nurse shortage in the aged care sector.

Enliven had offered to employ Mark and Mona initially as senior care workers so they had an income while they completed the required paperwork to become registered nurses (RNs).

To become New Zealand-qualified RNs, international nurses are required to sit an occupational English exam and get their qualifications and work experience verified, a process which takes several months to complete.

Enliven had provided them with support on a variety of levels to make the transition easier for them.

“Enliven has made the process very easy for us,” Mona said.

The pair were enjoying their new carer roles where they could oversee all the care needs of their patients, get to know them better and develop relationships with them.

“The residents have become like our small extended family, which had created a greater level of work satisfaction,” Mark said.

In their previous roles, they had little and often fleeting interaction with the patients they cared for.

The Filipino couple had moved to New Zealand in search of a better life for their young family.

“New Zealand is our dream country,” Mark said.

“It is very safe and peaceful and very scenic,” Mona said.

“And the people are very nice,” Mark added.

Mark said they had made the move because it was difficult to raise a family in the Philippines due to the high cost of schooling.

The pair have two children aged two and eight years who were still living in Philippines with extended family. Mark and Mona are in the process of applying for New Zealand residency, which would enable their children to join them.



“The residents have become like our small extended family, which had created a greater level of work satisfaction.”

Mona said being away from their children was difficult, but they were focused on creating the positive future they wanted for their family.





Despite the cooler climate, they had found it easy to adjust to life in their adopted homeland.

“We find Invercargill very multi-cultural, and there is a large Filipino community here,” Mark said.

The couple’s advice to others considering relocating to New Zealand was to start the paperwork straight away because it could take several months to complete, and not to get disheartened by the lengthy process.

“It is well worth it [once you are here],” Mona said.

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Husband and wife Mark and Monaliza Cordero work across Peacehaven’s Iona dementia unit and hospital wing.





# *A listening ear*

Meet Enliven  
Southland's new pastoral  
care coordinator  
Shirley Keen



## Enliven's new pastoral care coordinator Shirley Keen has swapped welcoming visitors into her home-based hospitality business for visiting others in their homes, but her core values of providing care and comfort to others remains her focus.

Shirley joined the Enliven team in January.

“I feel very privileged to be in this role,” she said. “I am excited about the challenge, growing in myself, working with the team at PSS and getting to know the residents.”

The born and bred Southlander grew up on a family farm at Wakapatu Beach near Colac Bay.

She is the mother to three grown sons, and a widow of several years.

Before taking up the position of pastoral care coordinator for Enliven (sometimes known as a chaplain), Shirley ran her own AirBnB business for more than five years.

“It was time for a change,” she said. “I lost my passion for what I was doing, due to the restrictions imposed by COVID-19.”

Although not an ordained minister, Shirley has a wealth of experience to offer the role of pastoral care coordinator.

She grew up in the church, with her father Leo Austin, a pastor in Orepuki for many years.

Shirley said she had performed various voluntary roles and led groups within the church over many years. She had also volunteered as a chaplain at Southland Hospital for the past 18 months.

She enjoyed the chaplaincy role at Southland Hospital, so she decided to start looking for a more permanent position doing a similar role.

The pastoral care role at Enliven Southland was a good fit, she said.

“Pastoral care is something I am passionate about, and I have a heart for the elderly.”

Shirley said when she started the role she was given a manual to read about Presbyterian Support Southland. There was a statement in the Provision of Services section which read – ‘PS is to respond to the call of Jesus Christ to bring God’s love and care to the people’.

“When I read that I knew I was in the right place. That is the heart of me.

“I have a relationship with God, and I want to bring this comfort and hope and encouragement and aroha to the people I meet.”

The pastoral care role involved supporting residents’ spiritual needs, whether that be offering comfort or a listening ear, arranging Bible study classes, facilitating church services and offering prayer where it was appropriate.

“It will be an holistic approach, and I will support residents of all faiths.”

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“Pastoral care is something I am passionate about, and I have a heart for the elderly.”

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# Giving back

Little Buddy becomes a Big Buddy, a legacy of impact

The experience of being a Little Buddy had such a profound impact on Gemma Wells-Todd's young life that as an adult she was determined to give back.

"I remember how much I always looked forward to being picked up and going to do fun activities. Those few hours a week meant so much as I got to have one-on-one time with someone I could talk to," she said of being a Little Buddy.

Gemma joined the Invercargill Buddy Programme as a troubled 12-year-old after she started having problems at home and at school.

"The first time I met my Big Buddy I was so excited.

"She wasn't my mother's friend or my siblings' friend, she was just for me. Someone I could confide in and do fun things with."

The programme matches children between the ages of four and 12 with an adult who can offer them friendship, support, guidance, and encouragement.

Buddy Programme team leader Helen Goatley said through the Buddy relationship, Little Buddies' self-esteem and confidence grow and they develop social skills, not to mention it brings them joy and they have loads of fun together.

Gemma and her Big Buddy developed a strong friendship, enjoying a range of activities together from playing down by the river, watching movies and visiting her Big Buddy's family farm.

As a result of that positive experience, the young Gemma decided that when she was old enough, she would become a Big Buddy and give back to another child.

And she has done just that.

Gemma joined the Buddy programme two years ago and is a Big Buddy to a 9-year-old girl.

Gemma said she was matched with a young girl who was experiencing similar challenges to what she had experienced as a child.

"I know how it feels being in that place. I know how my Little Buddy feels."

As a result, the pair had formed a strong bond.

"We started out by spending a couple of hours together each week, but two years on, we now often spend the day together, and my Little Buddy

even stays the night at my house on occasion," she said.

One thing which had surprised Gemma about becoming a Big Buddy was the positive impact it had had on her own life.

"I thought it would be rewarding for my Little Buddy, but it is just as rewarding for me.

"My Little Buddy has taught me things and really made an impact on my life.

"We have such a strong friendship. I hope she will still be part of my life after the Buddy Programme."

Gemma recommended the Buddy Programme to others.

"It is so much fun. Not just for your Little Buddy, but for yourself, and you know you are making a difference in their life."

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"I know how it feels being in that place. I know how my Little Buddy feels."

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To find out more about the Buddy Programme, visit [pss.org.nz/family-works/services/buddy-programme](https://pss.org.nz/family-works/services/buddy-programme)

# Food rescue

Family Works and KiwiHarvest is a welcome partnership at a time when putting food on the table is becoming increasingly difficult.

Family Works Invercargill became a KiwiHarvest recipient (a charity or community group selected to receive the food donations) in August 2021.

It now receives weekly deliveries of packaged foods, dairy, meat, and fresh produce.

KiwiHarvest, is a national food rescue organisation which collects surplus and donated food and distributes it to community organisations to pass on to those in need.

KiwiHarvest Invercargill branch coordinator Jessie Beer said, “It is food which would have otherwise gone into landfill, so we are creating social good as well as environmental good.”

Jessie said Family Works ticked all the boxes.

“We are very proud to be supporting PSS and the great work they do in the community, and to be able to work alongside them and help break down barriers with whānau, with kai often being a starting point for many.”

Jessie said she had witnessed the positive impact KiwiHarvest had in the community first-hand when she was living in Dunedin. She had also volunteered with them.

When she moved back home to Invercargill, she saw a need for such a service and contacted KiwiHarvest’s national office about setting up a branch in the city.

Jessie started the Invercargill branch out of her garage in August 2021, using her own car to deliver food to 20 recipients. Nearly 18 months on, KiwiHarvest was now being operated out of a warehouse, had two dedicated delivery vehicles, 20 volunteers, and was delivering food to 50 recipients,



Family Works staff Arezoo Khodaei (left) and Himani Galbraith (right) help KiwiHarvest Invercargill coordinator Jessie Beer unload the van.

including women’s refuges, night shelters, low decile schools, maraes, and local food banks.

In that time, they had given out food for more than 874,000 meals.

Jessie said at present, they were feeding nearly 3000 people each week.

“The need is still growing.”

Initially the Invercargill branch of KiwiHarvest had received Ministry of Social Development funding to purchase food through the COVID-19 Relief Fund. That funding stopped in November last year, so the charity was now solely reliant on their supporters for food donations.

Family Works manager Irene Te Koeti said staff gave the families they were working with food provided by KiwiHarvest.

The food was always gratefully received, particularly in light of the increasing cost of living, she said.

“We are very proud to be supporting PSS and the great work they do in the community.”

“We would like to extend a big thank you to all those involved in KiwiHarvest for their hard work and commitment to make this happen for our families.”

Family Works Invercargill and Gore are among more than 250 registered charities and community groups from throughout the country selected to receive KiwiHarvest’s food for the families they support.

A portrait of Michelle Ryland, a woman with dark hair, smiling, wearing a black patterned top. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a body of water.

# Te Haerenga

Presbyterian Support Southland has welcomed full-time Pou Tohutohu Ahurea Māori - cultural advisor Michelle Ryland into the role, marking a new step in our Te Haerenga (cultural journey).

Michelle started her new role in November, marking the occasion with a mihi whakatau. Previously, the role had been part-time, with PSS to be the first of the seven Presbyterian Support charitable trusts across the country to develop it into a full-time role.

Former chief executive Michael Parker noted at the time of Michelle's appointment that it was a significant and important step for PSS on its cultural journey.

"The 2021 Strategic Plan provided an initial starting point to strengthen the cultural advisor role, which has

now progressed from part-time to a full-time Pou Tohutohu Ahurea Māori senior leadership position.

"This commitment provides Michelle, alongside the senior leadership team and Board, with the mandate to support a 'whole of organisation' development pathway towards partnership in line with Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Building the relationships between local runaka and PSS in a way that offers choice to people seeking support, the goal being that they receive the right response," Michael said.

Michelle works across Family Works, Enliven and PSS' central office. Michelle also represents PSS on Te Kahui Rangitira (National Presbyterian Support New Zealand Roopū of cultural advisors).

"I have enjoyed becoming more familiar with our rest homes and facilities and love watching our Kaimahi in action," she said.

"It is an exciting time to be a part of the PSS whānau as we navigate our way forward on our cultural haerenga."

# Together we can make a difference

Our staff work with more than 3600 vulnerable children, whānau/families and older people in Southland and the Whakatipu Basin every year. Every contribution, large or small, helps us help others.

## How to donate

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**Website:** [pss.org.nz/get-involved](https://pss.org.nz/get-involved)



**Internet banking:** Our bank account number is 02 0924 0545924 00 (BNZ)



**Cash/Eftpos:** Please visit our Central Office, 183 Spey Street, Invercargill, or any of our Enliven care homes

For more ways to see how you can help through donations or volunteering your time, please visit our website.

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Unemployment, poverty, family disputes, mental illness, loneliness, social isolation and social inequity are just some of the issues we see people struggling with every day.

Thank you to all those who have donated towards the work we do. Your donation will help enable us to walk alongside them, letting them know they are not alone and can get the support they need.

## Thank you to our major funders

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