

# PROJECT: YOUTH PROGRAMME

## A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN HUTT CITY COUNCIL AND VOLUNTEER HUTT, STAGE 2

### REPORT FROM VOLUNTEER HUTT TO HUTT CITY COUNCIL

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of this programme, since it was initiated in 2013, has been:

- **To develop** youth volunteering in Hutt City
- **To engage** more Hutt City young people in voluntary work including leading community events and activities
- **To engage** young people in the development of volunteer programmes that are inclusive and attractive to youth
- **To increase** the number of organisations that create meaningful voluntary roles that will interest youth

#### BACKGROUND

**Volunteer Hutt** has become, over the past few years, increasingly aware of the lack of opportunities for youth volunteering within the local community. It has also seen the need for community organisations to recognise the changing face of youth volunteers, and how they could involve youth in order create a future pool of volunteers. The youth approach includes shorter time availability, flexibility, use of social media to connect and the need to understand the intrinsic value of what they are doing rather



than taking on mundane, apparently meaningless tasks.

**Stage one was in partnership with Hutt City Council's Community Development with funding from MYD. Volunteer Hutt developed a programme that would involve youth and community organisations, with models to show how the experience could work from both sides.**

During early research, and conversations which have continued during Stage two we have found several common themes among the many different groups of young people with whom we have talked. These are that youth

- want to make a difference and know they are helping others
- are willing, enthusiastic and keen to work with projects in their local communities
- are motivated by seeing the impact and outcome of their volunteering activity

- are keen to take on decision making and leadership roles when given appropriate mentoring and training
- are keen to develop new skills, new networks and have new experiences.

We have talked with high numbers of young people during the past year, both those in different group cohorts and others who have come through our referral processes as individual volunteer seekers responding to our promotional activity. Work & Income youth clients, several local school students and other youth-focused groups have been among those represented. **Volunteer Hutt** community organisation members, Duke of Edinburgh programme managers and other agencies have also been a key focus.

We wanted young people to recognise that among the benefits of volunteering were:

- skills development and greater employability;
- that working for a cause has community impact, is fun, and will lead to new experiences and new knowledge;
- that participating in worthwhile activities creates a sense of belonging to the local community.

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We also wanted to ensure our member organisations created interesting and appropriate roles for young people and that the Duke of Edinburgh programme was flexible enough to meet the needs of the various people involved.

These conversations resulted in a solid foundation for the programme with several great successes in its first year. Note: This was acknowledged with **Volunteer Hutt** being awarded the Hutt City region award in the 2014 Wellington Airport Community Awards for child and youth development.

## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING – STAGE TWO

**RELATIONSHIPS** have continued with **Volunteer Hutt's** stakeholder groups covering both those with whom young people are involved, as well as community based organisations who work with volunteers.

The emphasis has been on collaboration and exploring new opportunities for interesting and innovative volunteer involving projects. Through these developments it has been possible to encourage and empower young people to experience life in parts of the city previously unknown to them, to build friendships and networks which have been both inter-generational and often cross-cultural, to build a sense of citizenship and belonging; as well as

discovering the skills required for leadership, time management and organisational processes.

**DIVERSITY AND ACCESSIBILITY** have been key factors as **Stage two** of the youth programme has developed. Young people involved have come from different backgrounds, cultures, ages and are spread across the many different districts of the Hutt Valley. They also cover those with disabilities and others who often remain isolated and on the margins of society. Our aim has been to create an inclusive and supportive environment with every project and placement that has taken place.

Tavila is one example of the diverse young people we have worked with during recent months:

*Tavila is a young man who visited **Volunteer Hutt** some time ago following recovery from illness. He came in earlier this year with support from his case worker looking for opportunities to get involved in a community activity. The role we found for him was with the HVDRT TriAbility event in March. He enjoyed this so much that he has taken on further activity with another of our community members, Te Omanga Hospice where he now volunteers weekly.*

**SCHOOL CONNECTIONS** have continued to be an important focus of the programme. Through numerous conversations we have opened up a range of different topics around volunteering. In some schools this have been about the introduction of volunteering and service; in others it was building on previous years' experience; and for others it was supporting and connecting them to community organisations and opportunities from within our membership.

## GOAL HIGHLIGHTS AND SUCCESSES SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT

An **inter-generational** partnership example:

*Through **Volunteer Hutt's** youth programme a partnership was established with Woburn Home, providers of aged care, and nearby Hutt Intermediate's Service Elective. This relationship led to 30 young people from the school regularly visiting the residents, building friendships and sharing stories. Feedback has been positive with both the elders and the young people enjoying the 'new friendships'. The success of the partnership is that it is now ongoing – another group of students will take on the visiting role next month.*

Through the connection the **Volunteer Hutt** youth programme has made between Red Cross and Refugee Services and the Hutt Valley High School Service (HVHS) Council, students have been introduced to the needs of refugee families and the different forms of support given by the organisation. The role they were able to take on as a group has been to set up and furnish houses for new refugee families arriving in the Hutt.

The junior school has also been able to participate in this project. By integrating the project into the



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whole school, continuity has been ensured. Younger students were able to keep the project moving at such times as when the senior students had exams. Staff have supported the project by working with the students. Students and staff found the experience 'eye-opening' and 'worthwhile'.

*'Hearing stories and the backgrounds of others in trying circumstances has led to selflessness for others ... It's an empowering way to make a difference, even if it's simple ... It's a great feeling to experience when people are gracious and thankful for the work that's been done. To know that you've contributed.'* Howe Deng, HVHS Service Captain 2015.

Hutt Intermediate has also been exploring volunteering through their Service Elective 'Pay It Forward.' Trialled for the first time in 2015, **Volunteer Hutt** has been partnering with the school to find suitable opportunities for the young students to experience different ways of serving through volunteering. This elective included 60 young people experiencing different forms of volunteering over six weeks.

Successful outcomes covered through evaluations were:

- Word of mouth and enjoyment of the roles taken helped to 'spread the word to others'
- A new awareness of the value of 'positive action'
- Diversity of opportunities keep interest alive
- Because the elective was so successful it will be run again later this year with a further 60 young participants eager to be exposed to volunteering city-wide.

As a result of the many talks with schools during **Stage two** of the youth programme Taita College is now exploring how volunteering could become a component of school life. They have invited **Volunteer Hutt** to speak with groups of students during the next semester. Naenae College are also interested in being more involved with partnerships with our community member organisations. Sacred Heart students have become active volunteers. Their most recent involvement was with the Naenae Holiday Programme and others will take part in an upcoming event with Trade Aid Petone.

### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Involvement with Team Naenae, one of **Volunteer Hutt's** long-term members has led to a number of interesting leadership development activities. Through regular holiday programmes we were able to increase the involvement of young people who were able to support as well as take on leadership roles with additional responsibilities. Said Deah Nocete from one of the local schools we work with: *'I was keen to get involved with the holiday programmes. Volunteering is good to get into. You learn heaps and help others.'*

Another organisation where we were able to encourage the development of new skills and leadership was with the Hutt Valley Disabled Resource Trust and the annual event they organise, TriAbility. There is a range of different roles appropriate for young people with HVDRT – and the TriAbility event has been a highlight for the two years since the youth programme was initiated. Young people involved have enjoyed being



part of such an important event for people with disabilities. TriAbility will continue to be a fantastic opportunity for young people to walk alongside people with different abilities, to be upskilled into the various areas of such an event and to develop their leadership and management experience.

Currently the HVHS service council is working on a Winter Ball for Woburn Home, an aged care provider and also a long-term **Volunteer Hutt** community organisation member. These connections have provided opportunities for the young people to learn about the very different needs of specific communities – and the support agencies who provide the services to respond to these needs.

'Leadership and citizenship' is something we have had incredible feedback on from organisations and our volunteers. It has been a pleasure to receive positive feedback from organisations which have had volunteers who have shown their capability in the role, and also to hear from the young people about how much they have learnt and grown during the process of volunteering.

Working with so many diverse groups of young people, it has been important to work closely with our



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community organisation members to support them to create roles within their volunteer programmes which enable involvement that give appealing options – such as one-off or short-term projects, annual events or regular and ongoing roles. And we also offer appropriate training and mentoring.

### CHALLENGES

**Volunteer Hutt's** youth programme follows the definition of young people from the United Nations, and included those up to the age of 24. Organisations may often feel that young people are limited in what they have to offer as volunteers. Our aim has been to break down this barrier. Therefore much of our dialogue with community organisations has been around what are some of the opportunities that could be suitable for young people. How do we adapt some of our roles to engage the gifts of young people? How can we work with short-term, project based volunteering?

### POSITIVE RESULTS

It is reassuring to be able to report that during **Stage two** of the youth programme we have been able to work with so many flexible and positive organisations that have understood the value of young volunteers within their organisation, and have effectively worked alongside our rangatahi to ensure a great experience for the organisation and young people alike. *They are aware that a legacy for the future is being created through the involvement of these young volunteers.*

Trade Aid Petone is a good example of young volunteers carrying out regular retail work in the local shop, as well as getting



involved with organising celebratory one-off events which require specialised skills.

### FURTHER PARTNERSHIPS

Besides the community organisations already mentioned in this report we have also worked with Faith groups, we have continued Duke of Edinburgh volunteer participation among our community members and we have encouraged young unemployed youth via Work and Income to use our services and to find roles which will develop skills, networks and confidence.

We continue to work with several parts of the Hutt City Council – staff, community hubs, and relevant services to keep connected to the changing providers for young people. We have also found, through attending regular Hutt Youth Workers Network (HYWN) meetings that we have been able to connect with other stakeholders who are now aware of the services of **Volunteer Hutt**.

### FURTHER FINDINGS

Communication continues to be an ongoing development, as we seek to engage with a broad range of people. Facebook has been one of the most successful methods with the **Volunteer Hutt** page going from 70 likes to now almost 300.

However overall, a mix method

communication approach has been important. This has included social media, txts, emails and phone calls; with also the face-to-face connecting with organisations being key to successful volunteering placements.

We continue to make use of **Volunteer Hutt** resources already developed, such as the promotional volunteering video clip created by young people for young people. The high visibility vests make a fantastic visual impact when worn during events and group projects.

Gateway Programme is a space of interest with many local high schools involved. The programme provides an accessible platform in which volunteering can be incorporated within the school system. We have had interest from a few schools that see the potential for including volunteering opportunities in the Gateway programme. **Volunteer Hutt** plans to explore this connection further in the future.

### OUTCOMES

As relationships between young people and community organisations have grown the list of outcomes has also grown. Conversations with both the young volunteers and community organisations they have worked with, have resulted in many outstanding comments:

- They have learnt about management and interpersonal skills – (*teachers and managers of volunteer programmes*)
- Confidence has been built – (*volunteers themselves and teachers*)
- New skills have been learnt such as organising, responsibility, patience, communication (*volunteers*)

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- Intergenerational connections have been important and valuable – *(volunteers and teachers)*
- Young people's grasp of technology and a 'changing world' and stories from older generations have established that there is much common ground to be acknowledged *(Woburn Home)*
- Exposing young volunteers' special talents and gifts – *(Volunteer Hutt)*
- Learning from the different organisations – such as Trade Aid – about justice and world issues – *(Management Trade Aid)*
- Leadership and citizenship have been gained – *(volunteers and organisations)*

Many young people have thrived with these new experiences, gaining



new skills and confidence, and have stated that they have learnt more about both themselves and their community. Cultivating a sense of responsibility and the ability to make a difference in the world and knowing that they are contributing meaningfully will often lead to attitudinal change; being interested in volunteering in the future.

*'I really loved doing something for someone other than yourself. A sense of how important the background of a community can impact what is going on – that you can't just live in your own kinda world. You become more aware and familiar with the situations and needs of the city.'*

Helena Li.

### SUMMARY

There's a saying that you can tell the health of a community by how well the young people are thriving. Despite the challenges of a more complex world, it is positive to see that young people in the Hutt Valley are volunteering and actively finding ways to be contributing and involved in community.

It has been reassuring to see young people invested in the life of their city, involved in the

community and relishing the opportunities that are presented.

**Volunteer Hutt's** youth programme has engaged a wide range of young people from Hutt City. In the past year 126 have been involved from the ages of 11–24 years. Represented are different cultures, Pakeha, Maori, Pacific Island, Asian, and others; different abilities and different parts of the city. With events coming up within the next few months even more will be involved before the end of the year.

Community organisations have enjoyed the energy, enthusiasm and ideas of the young people involved. They have observed these volunteers maturing, learning and showing commitment. The future is positive.

**Volunteer Hutt** will continue to build collaborative partnerships and find ways to encourage young people to become involved in community activity and community life. The youth programme has provided a strong platform from which we can continue this significant work.

**Karen Yung**

*Youth Programme coordinator*

**Volunteer Hutt**

August 2015

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## YOUTH PROFILES

### HELENA LI

“... you become more aware and familiar with the situations and needs of the city.”

After researching local volunteer opportunities as part of the Duke of Edinburgh programme, **Helena Li** found out about and connected into the **Volunteer Hutt** Youth Programme. This led to an opportunity to work at the Te Omanga Hospice Op Shop. Following her first year of volunteering, she also spent some dedicated time in her school library as well as the SPCA Op Shop.

Through this experience she became more community orientated. “A sense of how important the background of a community can impact what is going on – you can’t just live in your own kinda world. You become more aware and familiar with the situations and needs of the city.” Discovering wider issues, such as waste, and what our role as citizens could be began to go side by side with her volunteering experiences.

Since her initiation to volunteering, Helena has become more involved with a wide range of volunteer opportunities through **Volunteer Hutt**. She helped with Christmas gift wrapping with Jackson Street Programme and Birthright, as well as a Christmas lunch, enjoying being exposed to different things going on in the city. She is very proactive, looking for involvement with the Team Naenae holiday programme and other



Helena Li

similar opportunities, and she keeps looking for more opportunities in which she can become involved.

With the busyness of school life she said that Volunteering can be a “great way to keep developing creative skills and passions.”

Having experienced such diverse volunteering opportunities, Helena is eager to explore how she might continue to volunteer despite a location change when she heads up to Auckland for university next year.

Not only has she learnt skills around the retail sector, developed inter-personal skills and critical thinking, she has also become more self-aware. “As a student, you are influenced by experiences; these may affect your choices, especially in how you develop your future – what you choose to study in. You develop self-awareness.”

### DEAH NOCETE

“At the end of the day you feel like you’ve helped people ... made a difference in people’s lives even if it’s small.”

Through hearing about it from friends, **Deah Nocete** first got involved with volunteering at her school’s Service Council. **Volunteer Hutt** first met her as the main contact for the Service Council. Her enthusiasm has led to a group of young people from Hutt Valley High School becoming involved with the **Volunteer Hutt** Youth Programme.

Earlier in the year the service council were keen helpers of Team Naenae’s Holiday Programme. Deah talked about the sense of community building which happened during “a hands on experience working with younger kids.” The learning side, she said, was as important to those that they worked with as it was for the volunteers who were developing new skills and confidence within the team; as well as building up confidence and inter-personal skills as an individual.

Among the line-up of skills Deah talked about were time management, responsibility, patience, communication. She recognises how valuable these experiences are for herself and her future endeavours – as well as for those she worked with.

Another significant volunteering experience she connected with through **Volunteer Hutt** was with Red Cross Refugee Services and the setting up of homes for recently arrived refugee families. Deah learnt

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a lot about those who they were supporting; she also found that the tasks required fostered her skills in supervising and organising other students from the Volunteer Army.

She sees volunteering as “good to get into” and is keen to continue volunteering in the future, knowing that there are diverse experiences, new people to meet, giving back to the community, skilled development for future opportunities. “At the end of the day you feel like you’ve helped people ... made a difference in peoples’ lives even it’s small.”

### HUTT INTERMEDIATE SERVICE COUNCIL

“It’s been an example of great faith and support from other organisations.”

In 2015, **Hutt Intermediate** branched out in its development of a Service Elective, to ‘Pay It Forward’ in the wider community. Leaders of this elective met with **Volunteer Hutt** to explore a range of possibilities and opportunities for a group of about 60 young people seeking a way of “making a difference in the world.”

Each week for six weeks students were exposed to different forms of serving and contributing. Their activities ranged from beach clean ups, to in-house pancake and card making, to planting on the banks of Waiwhetu Stream, to car washes at Te Omanga Hospice, to visiting the elderly at Woburn Home; as well as spending time at Waterloo School reading to junior students.

Anna Grace, one of the teachers leading the elective, says she has noticed the positive outcomes from the elective. “Word of mouth has

made it popular.” In fact it’s caught so much interest that she and Rhyllie Alexander, another teacher leading the elective, have seen another full group of 60 young people sign up for the next round of electives.

“There were many positive outcomes,” said Anna. “The young people weren’t put off from helping without payment, but found they really enjoyed it. Especially as they’ve become more aware of the consequences of their actions and the ripple effect which has followed.”

Another plus was how community organisations have become involved and partnered with the school. “It’s been an example of great faith and support from other organisations.”

Te Omanga Hospice were incredibly thankful for the students, with their Facebook post gaining much interest and showing that young people really can contribute meaningfully in the wider community.

### HOWE DENG

“It’s a great feeling to experience when people are gracious and thankful for the work that’s been done ... that you’ve contributed.”

The Service Captain of Hutt Valley High School 2015, **Howe Deng**, has been an avid volunteer since his days at Intermediate. Beginning with activities such as beach clean ups and bucket collections, this has led to leadership opportunities and management within the service sector.

One of Howe’s first experiences as part of the **Volunteer Hutt** Youth Programme has been with the set-up of refugee houses through Red Cross

Refugee Services. This experience helped him, he said, to see the shift of being somewhat self-centred in his younger days, and growing out of that, into humility. “Hearing stories and the backgrounds of others in trying circumstances has led to selflessness for others.”

The words of his school principal has impacted and challenged Howe: “If we looked after ourselves and those next to us, our neighbours, things would look incredibly different.” This has influenced how he has led the Service Council and Volunteer Army at HVHS; as well as how he’d like to see it develop beyond his time in the leadership role.

The Service Council, now in its’ third year has made notable progress. Almost 300 students were involved in Relay For Life raising \$10,000 for the Cancer Society. This amazing success instilled pride within the school as well as achieving meaningful service. “It’s a great feeling to experience when people are gracious and thankful for the work that’s been done ... that you’ve contributed.”

As someone who is passionate about the school, he’s glad to have seen that positive connections have been made and developed. “Organisations want to keep working with HVHS,” he said.

His dream now is to see the Service Council become a place in which others can bring their ideas, and see them mobilised as a way of both being connected and giving back to a number of local communities.

Without a doubt Howe will be continuing to volunteer beyond his years at high school. He also recognises that others can be involved too. “There is something out there for everyone. It exists – you just need to find it.”