



Across the Spectrum



He waka eke noa
[We're in it together]

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SPECTRUM FOUNDATION GROUP



From the CE

AUTUMN 2023

We're approaching the end of our financial year, so our Executive Team, our three Boards, and our Finance Team have been busy preparing budgets for 2023-24 and finalising our strategic plans. I'm looking forward sharing our Group's strategic objectives in the coming months.

I'm pleased to relate that our social housing subsidiary Homes of Choice has been successful in its application to the Affordable Housing Fund, with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development providing 50 per cent capital to redevelop a number of existing sites. This will allow Homes of Choice to deliver an additional 48 beds across an array of affordable homes for disabled people and their whānau over the coming year.

It's also been pleasing to see increasing momentum towards Spectrum Foundation's philanthropic priorities, with funding for the following recently committed by the Spectrum Foundation Board:

- Gig Buddies Auckland delivered by Spectrum Care in partnership with the Student Volunteer Army, to address loneliness for disabled people who want a buddy to attend events.
- *Building a Good Life* workshops for whānau by Parent 2 Parent. The first online workshop has already received lots of positive feedback from whānau.
- Autism assessments through Autism NZ for those who struggle to afford one through the public health system.
- A new organisation which will raise awareness and build connection and community for disabled people, alongside Foundation North, Todd Foundation, and JR McKenzie Trust.

We look forward to seeing the impact Spectrum Foundation's funding is having for disabled people and whānau that we wouldn't have been connected with in the past. You'll see more about our recent funding initiatives later in the issue, as well as exciting updates from Spectrum Care and Homes of Choice.

Congratulations to Brian Donnelly

Homes of Choice Board member Brian Donnelly has been inducted into the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to social housing.

Brian Donnelly was listed amongst the most celebrated New Zealanders on the New Year's Honours list for 2023. He will be awarded the Honour of Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in recognition of his outstanding service to the people of New Zealand.

Prior to joining the Homes of Choice Board in 2019, Brian was Executive Director of the inaugural New Zealand Housing Foundation since its establishment in 2002, where he was instrumental in developing innovative and affordable housing solutions.

He has been on several housing and property advisory boards, including BRANZ, and also chaired The Wilson Home Trust for physically disabled children and the Tāmaki Regeneration Company.

Brian was primarily responsible for introducing a new model of shared ownership housing to New Zealand, which has enabled the government and Community Housing Providers to deliver real housing outcomes and make a difference in many people's lives.



His experience of property asset management and development and his focus on creating good quality, affordable housing and acknowledging Te Tiriti o Waitangi has empowered communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.

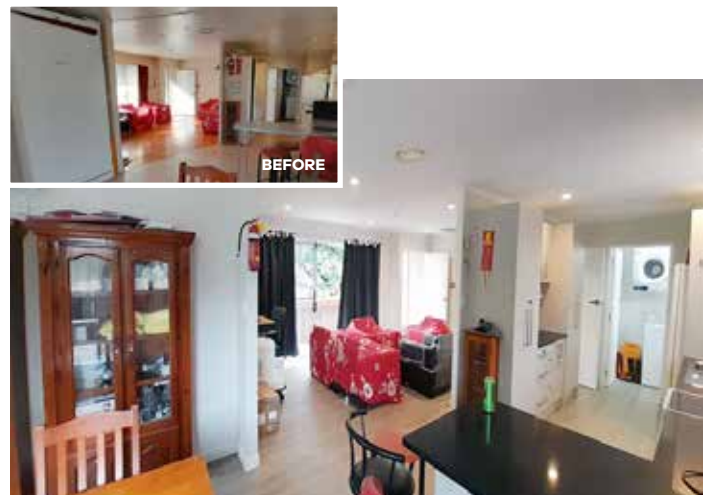
This honour is a testament to his commitment to community development and the lifetime he has spent in service of others.

Safety and comfort for years to come

The storms and cyclone made the first quarter of 2023 a busy one for Homes of Choice but, despite the extra repairs and remedial work, the team managed to make significant progress on planned maintenance projects, including major upgrades at one of our properties in Māngere.

In addition to a full exterior repair and painting and plumbing and electrical upgrades, the interior was fitted out with a new kitchen and laundry, two new bathrooms, and new flooring throughout!

Our contracting partners worked incredibly hard to achieve the best outcome for the residents, and even included some additional upgrades to help future-proof the home, ensuring safety and comfort for our tenants for years to come.



A fantastic day out on the water with Wish4Fish!

A group of people we support recently went on a full-day boating trip, thanks to Wish4Fish!

Wish4Fish is a non-profit organisation that provides charters for disabled people, people with mental illnesses or those experiencing financial hardship.

Their one-of-a-kind vessel ensures an enjoyable experience for disabled passengers. In addition to an electric ramp, a spacious lower deck and galley, and a wet room, it has a high-displacement catamaran for added stability, making it safer and more comfortable for those with reduced balance.

It's one of the only boats in the world with a wheelchair-accessible lift, meaning all participants can access the upper deck and flybridge. Wish4Fish also provides state-of-the-art adaptive fishing gear for those with limited mobility.

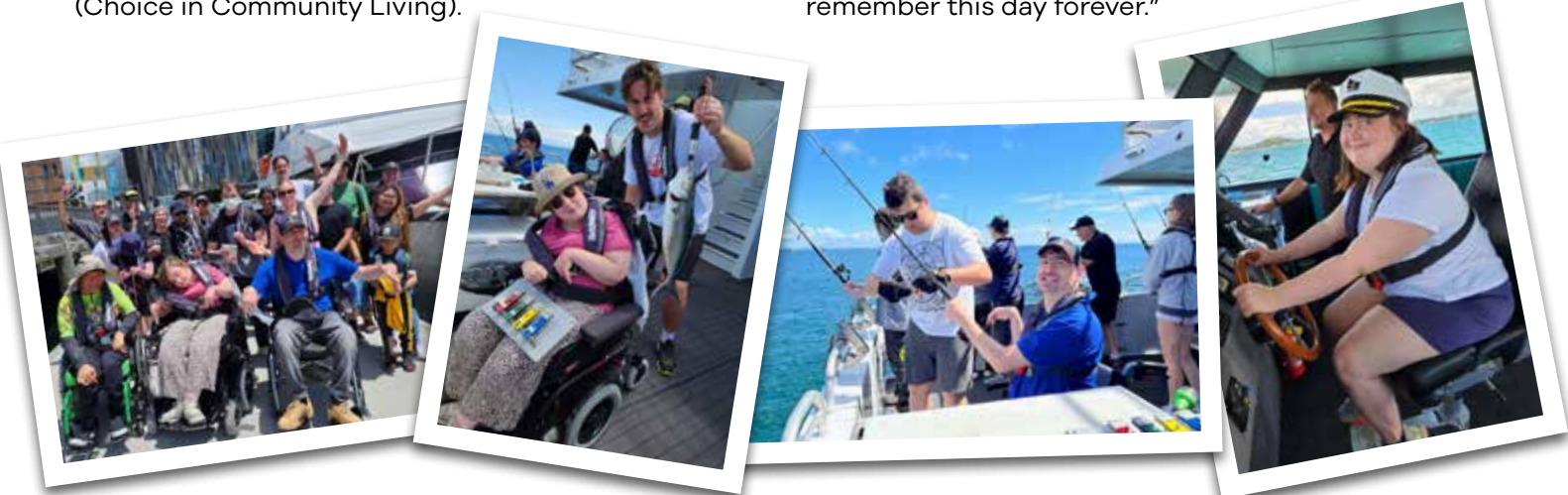
The Spectrum Care trip was organised by Brendan Mason, Regional Community Facilitator for CiCL (Choice in Community Living).

He says the facilities on board made it easy for everyone to get involved, "The boat is fully wheelchair-accessible, and the custom equipment is amazing. It was cool to see people putting out lines and reeling in fish themselves.

"For some, it was their first time fishing, but now they're hooked! No one wanted to leave, but luckily, everyone caught heaps of fish to take home for dinner!"

Wish4Fish provides trips for over 1000 people each year, most of which are funded by donations and made possible with the help of a volunteer crew. Demand is high, but Brendan and his team are hoping to organise more charters for the people we support.

"Being out on the water has so many mental health benefits, but more often than not it's not accessible for people with disabilities. It's something a lot of us take for granted, but everyone who went will remember this day forever."



Turning passion into progress

Ally Gow, a Community Support Worker in our Aspirations Team, was able to utilise her passion for fitness to help some of the people we support make greater progress towards their goals.

When Ally took a group of young adults to the gym, she noticed that although everyone enjoyed working out with assisted weights, they weren't using them very often.

"In a group with no trainer, it's harder to support people to try new things, so they end up sticking with what they know, and spending most of their time on the treadmill or exercise bikes."

As a qualified personal trainer with a background in sports psychology, Ally knew it would be difficult for people to make progress if they couldn't try new things and push their limits, so she set to work searching for a more accessible full-body workout programme.

After evaluating a few options, she took the group to a trial session at Functional Adaptive Movement (FAM), who offer group exercise classes and personal training sessions for people with physical and intellectual disabilities, neuromuscular conditions, brain and spinal cord injuries, vision and hearing impairments, and sensory disorders.

With large group classes and more dynamic exercises, FAM was a complete change from the usual programme, but Ally was blown away by the positive response from the group, "Everyone loved it from the get-go. It's hard to create that kind of atmosphere

Spectrum Care's Speech-Language Therapy Team leading the way in communication

After several years' work researching how people communicate, Spectrum Care's Speech-Language Therapy (SLT) Practice Lead Hannah Barnes has recently had a paper published in the *Journal of Clinical Practice in Speech-Language Pathology*.

"Typically, communication is described as 'verbal' or 'non-verbal', but this doesn't capture what a person understands. Communication isn't all or nothing – there's a range of skills and abilities," says Hannah.

"What someone understands and how they express themselves can be different. In order to provide person-centred support, we need to ensure information is given in a way that people understand, and that we're actively listening to them."

The SLT team searched for an existing framework that would better illustrate the ways that people understand and communicate, but were unable to find anything that suited their needs.

As one of the few disability providers with Speech-Language Therapists, Hannah and her team was in the unique position of being able to use both academic research and clinical knowledge to develop a framework that defined several categories of both understanding and expression.

After two years of trialling and reviewing these 'Communications Descriptors' with the people we support, they began working with a group of Speech and Language Therapy academics at Massey University and the University of Auckland to publish their findings.

The research is the first of this kind in Aotearoa, and has been recognised as sector leading, having been presented at the NZ Speech-Language Therapy Conference and the Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability. The findings will be published in the *Journal of Clinical Practice in Speech-Language Pathology*.

Within Spectrum Care, the framework is already helping to improve understanding of communication skills and guide individualised, person-centred, and mana-enhancing supports.

"Having a clearer starting point than 'verbal/non-verbal' helps us to assess whether someone may benefit from a particular communication tool, which means we can provide quicker recommendations and more intentional strategies for communication support," says Hannah.

It's also been used to deliver more targeted training to staff, such as using communication tools, and to support with service transition with health, education, and specialist providers.

As funding models and budgets change, this framework could support people with individualised budgets to access communication support, something that currently isn't funded for adults with disabilities.



in the gym by yourself, but at FAM, everyone is so positive, and motivation is much higher."

All the FAM coached have qualifications in adaptive fitness, and the classes are designed to empower people to become as independent as possible in their day-to-day lives by incorporating exercises that help them to build strength, increase range of motion, and move their body in new ways.

Coach Jodie Loveday explains how she adjusts the programme to suit each person. "We start with the root of the movement, and meet the person at their level. With arm exercises, someone with reduced balance might need to sit down, or have a bar to help them stand. For a squat, a wheelchair user could do an arm variation of the same exercise, or a person with weaker grip could use a different type of weight that they can grab with their whole arms, rather than their hands."

Welcoming our new Board members!



Te Wai Kahukura Atawhai

We've recently had two new members join the Spectrum Care Board – Nan Jensen and Peter Fergusson.

Nan joined the Spectrum Care Board in October 2022 and is a barrister and solicitor in sole practice, specialising in disability law. Nan is on the Professional Expert Panel for Altogether Autism, the Steering Group for Auckland Disability Law and is a Director of The Disability Trustee Limited.

Nan was diagnosed as autistic in 2020 and is mother to two autistic children.



Peter joined the Spectrum Care Board in October 2022. He is Chief Executive Officer of Leukaemia & Blood Cancer New Zealand, a charity dedicated to supporting patients and their families living with leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma and related blood conditions. He also Chairs the Board of Osteoporosis New Zealand, and has recently joined the Spectrum Foundation Board.

As a father of a son living with disability, Peter is acutely aware of the challenges that individuals and families encounter on a regular basis. He's committed to leading and influencing improvement across the disability sector.

Both Nan and Peter bring a wealth of experience in the disability sector to the Board, and we're excited to have their expertise and leadership on our team. As an organisation that aims to maximise the potential of the people we support, we are proud to have a Board that is led by people with lived experience of disability; after all, 'Nothing about us, without us.'

We're confident that they will provide valuable insights and perspectives as we work towards achieving Our Vision: Every person with a disability deserves a life of choice, freedom and independence.

Building strength, confidence and muscle!

Disabled people often face additional challenges when it comes to keeping fit, such as accessibility of equipment, facilities and transport.

"Going to the gym for the first time is scary for anyone, but it's even harder when the environment isn't designed for you. In an ideal world, all gyms would be accessible and all trainers would be qualified in adaptive movement, but unfortunately most places aren't inclusive," says Jodie.

Societal stigma can also play a part. "As a coach, my role is not just about helping people to build strength, but giving people the tools and confidence to do more things independently."

"The societal view of disability definitely affects the way that people see themselves," says Ally. "They are told their whole lives that they're not able to do certain things. FAM is great because it provides a safe space for people to push their limits and reach their full potential."

Thanks to Ally, Jodie and their teams, the Henderson Aspirations group are becoming stronger, fitter and more confident in their abilities.

Spectrum Foundation is up and running!

In 2022, Spectrum Foundation began its first round of funding. Two organisations – Gig Buddies and Parent 2 Parent – received funds to support new projects that deliver positive economic, social, and emotional outcomes for disabled New Zealanders.

Gig Buddies Auckland

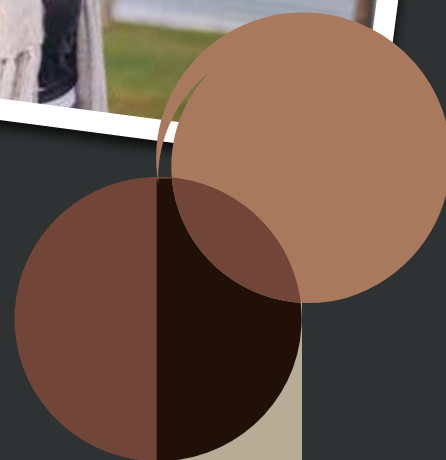
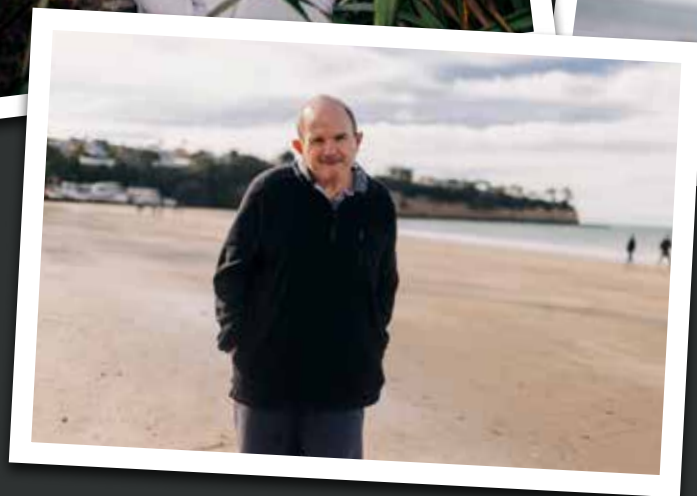
Gig Buddies is an international programme that promotes greater social inclusion and diversity by connecting people with disabilities with volunteers who share their interests and passions. The pairs attend live music and cultural events together, which provides opportunities for people with disabilities to participate more fully in the cultural life of their community.

With funding from Spectrum Foundation, Spectrum Care will launch New Zealand's first Gig Buddies programme in Auckland, enabling people across the city to experience new things, strengthen their natural support networks, and do more of the things they enjoy.

'Building a Good Life' workshops from Parent 2 Parent

Quality, inclusive education leads to better life outcomes for all children but, in Aotearoa, many people with disabilities experience exclusion from and within education. Disabled ākonga (students) are more likely to experience discrimination and bullying and are more likely to be stood down, suspended or excluded than their non-disabled peers.

Parent 2 Parent connects parents and siblings of disabled people to support networks and offers workshops and resources on a range of topics related to disability. Thanks to funding from Spectrum Foundation, Parent 2 Parent is able to offer new workshops that aim to address some of the inequalities in education by helping whānau to understand their rights, build partnerships with educators, and support and advocate for disabled children and ākonga in education spaces.



**SPECTRUM
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