



Newsletter - Issue 19

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We are now well into the first Term of Year 8 of the Dreamers' educational journey. It is the 5th year of our programme, and we are excited that so many of them are still strongly engaged with us. With the transition to High School next year, this is a crucial year for us to ensure that their academic preparation is on a sound footing, that each of them has an assigned mentor (NOTE: we still need more male mentors!), and that they know we are with them all the way!

Dreamer makes the Headlines!

Aroha Ireland has had her 15 minutes of fame, after being caught up in an interesting political debate recently. The Leader of the Opposition (National Party), John Key, made a major speech in February about the so-called "underclass," and he profiled a street in Mt Roskill as an example of the families trapped by the "missing rungs on the ladder out of poverty." Mr. Key caused considerable ructions with his comments, but he at least had the courage to visit McGehan Close and meet some of the people involved. It just so happens that three of our Dreamers live on that street, and one of them, Aroha, ended up being invited by Mr. Key to accompany him to the Waitangi Day celebrations.



Aroha with Leader of the Opposition John Key

There was a special news report about Aroha's trip on TV One's Close Up programme, which you can view at <http://tvnz.co.nz/view/page/410965/979292>. The media and political commentary continued to swirl, so we invited Mr. Key to visit the Dreamer Centre and learn about what we we're doing. He graciously gave us almost 2 hours of his time, and was very aware of and interested in the issues facing some Kiwi families. Please see our website for a number of outcomes from that meeting, including:

- our Media Release for the meeting
- a link to the subsequent interview on TV One's Breakfast show
- an MP3 file with an interview from RadioLive

While many NZ'ers continue to believe that our society is as blessed and egalitarian as it was from the '50s to the '70s, we believe that there are serious stresses facing our communities, especially our youth. We are glad that Mr. Key's speech has focused so much attention on this vital issue.

Focusing on our learning can be fun!

As part of our after school programme this year we have introduced a "focus session." The "focus session" is a 45 minute slot in the programme where we get together and focus on different types of enjoyable activities that stimulate the Dreamers' thinking. Each week the focus changes and we cover anything from hands-on activities and team building projects to guest speakers and career exploration, etc. This picture above shows Dreamers Aaron and Nabil creating their own structure using only straws and sellotape. It held 10 apples before collapsing - that was 5 more than any of the other Dreamers could do!



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NZVCA encourages the Dreamers

Many of our Dreamers gave up a nice sunny day of their school holidays to come into our Dreamer Centre to do a "study day" for the PAT tests that they would be facing in the first few weeks of the school year. It was terrific to have 25 kids show up, which shows that they really do want to learn. But it was even better at the end of a hard day studying to be able to offer them a "get ready for school" backpack (kindly donated by the NZ Venture Capital Association), as a gift for their effort in turning up and trying so hard.

The photo shows the kids sporting their new backpacks outside our building, in front of our newly painted mural (see the story on pg.3). The kids were totally stoked when Ant pulled them out - you should have seen their eyes light up!

Whoever thought that NZVCA could be so "cool," huh? This may be the first photo of the next generation of budding Pasifika capitalists ☺



Dreamers with their new NZVCA backpacks.

Performance Review

Ant, Lynn and Scott had a working session on Saturday March 24th with Jan Hill of The Education Group, who conducts our ongoing performance measurement. We spent a number of hours collating and analysing the academic data collected from the various schools that the Dreamers attend, and preparing individual plans for each child.



25 Dreamers attend our test preparation day during the holidays.

By understanding their personal stories and situations, we can tailor our offerings:

- Some of them still need outside professional remedial instruction to bring them up to their age group in their general literacy and numeracy abilities
- Others need focused review sessions with their tutors in the After School Programme sessions to plug specific holes in their academic skills
- While a few need to be offered extension opportunities so that they can tap into their special skills and interests, and/or extend their evident capacities in certain areas.

Go for the Peak Trip and 2007 Term 1 Results

On Saturday March the 10th we finally got around to rewarding the efforts of the 19 Dreamers who made it to "The Peak" for the final term of last year. Reaching "The Peak" means they are achieving between 90-100% average in their I Have a Dream attendance, School Attendance, and School Classroom Effort. The Dreamers got to spend the day at Rainbows End amusement park as a reward for their exceptional efforts. It was interesting to note that 15 of the 16 Dreamers who have assigned mentors made it to "The Peak", which showed us that the support the mentors are giving is really making a difference. Congratulations goes out to Ana, Anoovi, Diana, Dwayne, Jade, Janita, Kesaia, Liliola, Luke, Malakai, McKayla, Mosa'ati, Raela, Robert, Ruth, Salote, Seini, Siosaia and Tailotu for the extreme efforts they put in to make it to "The Peak" in term 4 of 2006.



Malakai gives and takes the bumps with a smile.

STOP PRESS - "Go For The Peak" results have just come out for the first term of 2007. This year we upped the ante and made it a little harder to get to "The Peak". We have now increased it to five areas we are assessing the Dreamers in - the two new areas being their effort (as well as attendance) at the after school programme, plus we now have their parents involved in the scheme who have to give them a grade for their effort shown at home towards their education. The new system proved a little challenging for the first time around and we had a number of Dreamers who lacked the organizational skills to get their assessment forms filled out and handed back on time. As a result they will have some privileges removed which will painfully remind them to sort themselves out for next term. However, congratulations goes out to Dwayne, Janita, Leva'ula, Malakai, May, Mikaele, Mosa'ati, Nabil, Salote and Toreka, who despite the bigger challenge still made "The Peak". Well Done!

Dreamer Achievements - Creating Tomorrow's Leaders

Ask most people who have anything to do with our Dreamers and they will tell you that they tend to stick out a little more from their counterparts when it comes to their confidence or their energy and drive to succeed. Give any group of kids a whole lot of unconditional love, encouragement, direction, and purpose and the former is bound to happen! It is not surprising then that as they are getting older they are starting to take up the reins of leadership within their schools and teams they represent. This year we are so proud of our many Dreamers that have taken up leadership roles that we just had to make special mention of them all.

Congratulations goes out to:

- **Anoovi Marwah** - Class Councillor on the School Councillor team and Aerobics Instructor at Blockhouse Bay Intermediate.
- **Janita Siva** - Class Councillor on the School Councillor team at Avondale Intermediate.
- **Luke Vakatini, Anna Moala, Leva'ula Matafai, and Mosa'ati Mafileo** - House Captains of their respective house groups at Wesley Intermediate school.
- **Robert Beniamina, Seini Ofamo'oni, Toreka(Michelle) Matafai, and Saeli Alatasi** - Vice House Captains of their respective house groups at Wesley Intermediate school.
- **Anna Moala and Toreka(Michelle) Matafai** - Health and Safety leaders at Wesley Intermediate school.
- **Ruth Talati** - Sports Team Captain for Kilikiti, Softball, Netball and Touch Rugby.

I anticipate that in years ahead we will see similar lists of Dreamers names, except the leadership roles may change to things like Minister of Parliament, Executive Director, Principal, Manager, Head of Department etc...

Artists in the Making?

So ya wanna become an artist? Artists Anita Levering, Hans Tommy, and Gina de Thierry worked with the Dreamers in Nov/Dec 2006 to illustrate their dreams on paper. Then Hans and Gina fused together the Dreamers' ideas and came up with this Mural which became a school holiday project for our Dreamers to paint on the building. The mural is a great eye catcher for everyone that passes along the main road where our centre is located. Special thanks to Anita for all her hours of dedication in driving and seeking funding for this project, and a big thanks to Resene Paints for giving us all the paint!



Mentor Training

We have almost completed the first of our newly developed 7-week Mentor Training Courses, based on the excellent system developed by Robin Cox. Lynn Su'a, our Mentor Coordinator (see Issue 17 of the newsletter) has done a fantastic job of delivering the training and equipping the mentors with the skills they'll need on this vitally important journey.

We are indebted to the 20 new mentors who have signed up to get involved in the lives of our Dreamers, and especially so to the 12 current mentors who have also participated in the training, offering their personal commentary on the importance of the role, the many personal skills that they've developed along the way, and the wonderful rewards they've gained from seeing their effect on young lives.

Auckland International Cultural Festival

This event was held earlier this month in the park beside Wesley Intermediate School, and it attracted a wonderful array of the cultures now making their home in Auckland. The selection of food, the range of crafts on display, and the splendour of the musical and dance performances were captivating. There was also a mini-United Nations soccer tournament, which the Dreamer team made a valiant effort in, ably coached by one of our long-serving tutors/mentors, Bonnie Gardner.

Below Left: Dreamer Mosa'ati sings for the festival crowd. Below Right: Nabil tries to manipulate the ball off the opposing team during the soccer tournament.



Personal Testimony From a New Volunteer

Ant and Lynn have spoken at the Senior Assemblies of our two local High Schools, and once again been inundated with applications from youth wanting to help our Dreamers. This email below perhaps illustrates why we continue to be positive about so many of the youth in our community.

Hi! My name's David Schaaf and I attend Mt Albert Grammar as a Year 11 student. I was there at a talk that you gave on Friday the 23rd of February. I am very enthusiastic about the offer which you announced in assembly.

I am a former Wesley Intermediate student myself and was one of the first students from Wesley to get into the top class in Year 9. I am an accelerate student, doing NCEA Level 2 Maths one year ahead of other Year 11 students. The specialist subjects that I am taking this year are Biology, Chemistry, Graphics (Design) and German.

I think Wesley Intermediate changed my life. Growing up from year 1 to year 6, I was a troubled student looking for something to do with my life. In Year 1, I got into a lot of trouble at Wesley Primary, which caused my Mum to move me to another school. But that didn't help either.

Mum then decided for me to go to Wesley once I reached Year 7. Wesley Intermediate gave me the new start I longed for. I realised that there were other students out there that needed more help than I did. I felt like a spoiled brat. I then thought that I should use my opportunities and get as much out of life as possible.

I understand the kids that go to this school because I come from a Tongan background and was brought up in the same community.

Please choose me because I would like to give back to the community which changed my life academically and socially. Please give me this chance!

Volunteer Profile

We've almost completed the 7 week training course for our biggest intake of new mentors. In a great example of the power of "Pay it Forward" (see the movie!) we are blessed with the efforts of Ms. Robyn MacLeod from the University of Auckland's Engineering School.

Part of Robyn's role is to organize mentors for her students, so that they gain wise advice from experienced practitioners. At the same time she has extended the model so that 9 of her 3rd year students being mentored have signed up to, in turn, mentor the Dreamers.

We are deeply grateful for Robyn's efforts, and of course the commitment from Andrea Loh, Ashley Young, Deepika Jaduram, Barbara Uy, Aditi Gulati, Therese Clark, Vivien Coelho, Sachi Kodippily and Lamia Anwar.



Mentor Coordinator Lynn Su'a (front left) with the 8 students from the University of Auckland's Engineering School.

Quote of The Day

Not every truant is a criminal, but every criminal was a truant.

- Aphorism used by Auckland Police

"The "I Have a Dream"® Programme helps children from low-income areas reach their education and career goals by providing a long-term program of mentoring, tutoring, and enrichment, with an assured opportunity for higher education."