

Volunteer News

Quarterly pānui - June 2024

whānau āwhina
plunket

Kia ora koutou

June is a special time of year as we celebrate [National Volunteer Week](#)! We are so grateful for the time and energy you dedicate to making a difference in the lives of whānau across Aotearoa New Zealand. Thank you for your care and support.

It's been a busy and exciting few months here at Whānau Āwhina Plunket, celebrating 30 years of our PlunketLine service which parents and caregivers can call 24/7 for free parenting advice.

I would like to acknowledge our very first Plunket ambassador – and youngest volunteer – ten-year-old Isla Jurgeleit, who you can read more about in this newsletter. Her family credits PlunketLine with her being here today. She is a remarkable young girl and we are thrilled to have her as part of the Plunket whānau.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to introduce our new National Community Services Manager, Melanie Laban. With a background in community development, Mel is working to foster a greater cohesion across the country in the volunteering space and enhance the great mahi already happening.

Her role will ensure that we remain steadfast in our commitment to volunteers across the motu. We are excited to have her on board!

Enjoy this latest edition of Volunteer News. We have some great mahi to highlight, including a fantastic fundraising event down south which brought Plunket staff and volunteers together, and we shine a spotlight on a passionate Aucklander who works hard to ensure new parents thrive.

Ngā mihi nui,



Fiona Kingsford, Chief Executive.



Happy Birthday PlunketLine!

Our much-loved free-to-call telehealth service celebrated its 30th birthday in April. We've received 2.5 million calls to PlunketLine since it started in 1993 – that's around 300 calls a day supporting concerned parents and caregivers of under-fives. We are so grateful to our amazing Plunket nurses who work day and night to support whānau across Aotearoa. [Read more](#)



Meet Isla, our first Plunket ambassador

As part of our PlunketLine birthday celebrations, we proudly announced Plunket's very first ambassador. Ten-year-old Isla Jurgeleit and her family are huge Plunket supporters. A phone call to PlunketLine when she was just 19 days old saved her life when she had bacterial meningitis. Now, Isla wants to help raise awareness of the work we do. [Learn more](#)

He huanui oranga mo ngā mokopuna whakatipuranga roto i ngā hapori heke iho, heke iho
Setting the path of wellness in our communities for the early years, for generations to come

Latest news

Volunteer shout-out event

Community Services Coordinator Ema Kelly and Plunket volunteers Tina Sanson and Ashleigh Tipene attended a Volunteering Northland morning tea in Mangawhai to celebrate community organisations and volunteers making a difference across Aotearoa New Zealand.

The trio met with the Kaipara District's Welcoming Communities Coordinator, Misty Sansom and other passionate volunteers.

One attendee credited Plunket for some training she received 30 years ago, which has encouraged and enabled her passion for volunteering ever since.

This was the first morning tea of its kind to be held in a smaller town and more are planned throughout June in various areas.



Community Services Coordinator Ema Kelly (left) with Plunket volunteers Tina Sanson and Ashleigh Tipene.

Thank you Megan!

Fabulous Plunket volunteer Megan Kirk ran our Renwick Playgroup in Marlborough for over 12 years. We are incredibly grateful to Megan for her dedication to Plunket over such a long period of time.

It's volunteers like her that make it possible for us to offer our services to whānau across Aotearoa New Zealand!



Plunket Winter Appeal

Our next major fundraising appeal focuses on grateful parents Sian and Matt and their baby, Lottie.

Their Plunket visit quickly turned into an urgent rush to hospital when Nurse Amy noticed that Lottie's breathing pattern was off.

Lottie was diagnosed with bilateral vocal cord palsy, spent numerous weeks in hospital and received in-home care for many months. Sian and Matt are beyond grateful for Amy and Plunket's services in general.

[Read their full account](#)



Celebrating our amazing volunteers

As part of National Volunteer Week Te Wiki Tūao ā-Motu a celebration was held in Auckland where the region's volunteers were honoured and retired nurse Jeannette Bilik was named Volunteer of the Year.

Jeannette will be a familiar face to many whānau across the North Shore. For the past seven years she's been one of our trusted volunteers visiting families at home offering practical support for those who need a helping hand.

Mum to three and grandmother to twins, Jeannette has shared many tips and tricks to settle pēpi to sleep. Her valuable skills, knowledge and compassion has seen her supporting many mums through some tough times too.

We are so grateful to have volunteers like Jeannette in communities across Aotearoa New Zealand. Be it supporting new parents at home, at play groups, toy libraries, lending a hand around the clinic or supporting fundraising events. We need you. We appreciate you – thank you for all that you do.



Jeannette Bilik with Community Services Manager Clare Green and Community Services Team Leader Katrina Fisher.

A focus on our volunteers

Gardens + Galleries fundraiser

Whānau Āwhina Plunket kaimahi and volunteers in the Otago region worked together to co-host a highly successful 'Gardens + Galleries' fundraising event in Queenstown, raising over \$30,000 for our organisation!

After 10 years of the popular Wakatipu Garden Tour weekend fundraiser, Plunket partnered with the Arrowtown Creative Arts Society (ACAS) this year to organise an even bigger and better event. Over 26 private gardens and local art galleries took part in a four-day event which saw dazzling displays of beauty and culture.

Festivities included a cocktail opening, garden and gallery tours and talks, workshops on garden and art-related topics, and a twilight opera session. There were auctions and raffles, plus an artists' trail across the Wakatipu, showcasing a diverse range of local painters and sculptors.

Community Services and Injury Prevention Coordinator Elessa Impey says the event received fantastic feedback from attendees and was a real team effort, with both kaimahi and volunteers contributing to its success.

"We had staff from around the organisation come together, as well as many wonderful volunteers who assisted by setting up, helping with garden maintenance and selling raffle tickets.

"It was an opportunity for such wonderful community collaboration, and it was really special as many of the people who attended or helped out were actually Plunket babies themselves."



Plunket volunteers Yoli Jenner (left) and Miae Kang



Plunket volunteer supports whānau to succeed

Volunteer superstar Diana Castaneira is working with Whānau Āwhina Plunket on Auckland's North Shore to empower new parents to thrive.

Since 2020, Ms Castaneira has been volunteering with our home visiting programme and has supported over 30 families. A desire to see parents and caregivers enjoy the early days with their tamariki is what drives her to give back to the community.

"Whānau need someone who really sees them. Someone who will listen and help without questioning or judging. The arrival of a pēpi (baby) should be a time of happiness and I want to give whānau the tools and confidence to make those first months a positive experience," she says.

Ms Castaneira also runs a parent coffee group, nannies and works at a local toy library. When out and about, she often bumps into whānau she has supported over the past four years.

"I recently saw the very first family I worked with and their baby is now four years old! It's incredibly rewarding and I feel we both left a lasting impression on each other that won't be forgotten. I love special moments like this."

Plunket's popular home visiting programme has been running since 2017. It enables passionate volunteers to provide practical support to families with young children who may be struggling, in the form of light housework, emotional support, advice and suggestions for community connection.

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please let us know by emailing annalee.hayward@plunket.org.nz