



From Left: Kim, Amber, Howard, Belena, Lamén and Danny

Transform has been a Peace haven oasis for many people over 2023, where they could rest and catch their breath. Our staff did a brilliant job creating a space where everyone could be themselves and gain the necessary tools to help them on their way. We have made many new friends this year and sadly said goodbye to others as they embarked on new adventures. Our greatest joy is being a part of their journey while watching their transformation.

The women's personal development programmes **Whakahonohono Mai and Te Moana Kura** were well supported over the year with forty-one ladies finding refuge. Women from all walks of life participated which was unexpected but refreshing. Professional ladies seeking to reorder their lives, find fresh purpose, and create new direction for the future. These women re-entered their professional spaces with invigorated stamina and clarity.

Te Kaupapa Whakamana and Te Ana Raiona our men's personal development programmes had thirty-eight in attendance. We are amazed at how many men say they have learnt more at Transform in two weeks than they did in all the time they spent in jail or rehab. A sobering thought really but encouraging for us that our programmes make a difference. The overall numbers of these men's and women's programmes may be low, but this encourages participants to be vulnerable and open in this space. We know this is what contributes to our successful outcomes.

Newsletter April 2024

Transform Aotearoa has people at its very heart.

We are dedicated to building healthy whānau and helping people take the next step in their personal journey towards wholeness, by providing practical tools and support in provincial New Zealand.

In seeking to walk alongside and foster healthy and whole communities across all generations, we are helping provincial communities in our nation to flourish. Through our personal development programs, up-skilling opportunities and group support, we are calling out the greatness in each one, and in turn, seeing hundreds of lives and families impacted for good.

www.transformaotearoa.org.nz

The **Men's Life Group** has continued to provide an avenue for forty-nine local men, to connect five days a week to build community in a positive environment. Gym sessions, helping in the community and regular trips to the Cow Café, see our men re-establish routine and structure for a healthy body and mind, which assists them to re-enter the work force.



Mens Life Group

Building Awesome Whanau and Teenage Toolbox

parenting programmes were again successful providing nineteen parents with practical tools to help raise children and youth in this modern world. Smaller classes continue to allow transparency of those who attend in a nonjudgmental atmosphere. Parents leave feeling better equipped to coach their children through childhood and the teenage years.

Our success at Putaruru College carried on in 2023 with **ShineGirl and Strength for boys** our in school personal development programmes. The school principal said, "It is the only class in the whole school that ever has 100% attendance." They were well supported and thankfully facilitators and staff see a difference in the youth by the end of the programme. We have run this for the past nine years and seen many young people change old mindsets.

Due to staff doing professional development study this year we put a hold on our after school teenage programmes **TYP for girls and Te Mana o Roto for boys**. We did not want to burn out our staff, by over committing them with programme facilitation. We are unsure about when these programmes will recommence.

Te Reo beginners and advanced language classes

continue to be popular with the locals. The beginner's class averages thirty students and the advanced class thirty-eight. The beginners accelerate their learning so they can join the advanced class by the end of each year. Allowing a fresh batch of students to begin the year afresh.



Love bomb Putaruru



After six years of running **Heroes and Giants** our after-school kids club for local at-risk children, we have decided to put it into recess for a season. There have been numerous setbacks with gaining access to spaces big enough and suitable to run this programme. Our facilitators got very creative running the programme in local parks or playgrounds when the weather was suitable. When this did not happen, they would do house calls with parents and children to keep the contact going in the hope that a more suitable venue could be found, and momentum would not be disrupted. Peter and Lani have done a lovely job building relationship with these children and giving them positive life skills, these youngsters will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

Love bomb Putaruru, our yearly event for Fire, Police, Ambulance, Overdale Community Centre, the Library, and the business community up and down Tirau Street. Over 35 businesses received either baskets of goodies or flowers and chocolates that were beautifully presented. Random acts of kindness like this are something we look forward to every year. Our first responders and the businesses give so much to this rural community and gifts like these are just a small token of our appreciation for all they do. Without them we would not have the amazing community we do. Putaruru is a beautiful place and showing our support is just one way we can do our bit to make sure it stays that way.

Transform purchased another **Toyota Aqua** this year due to the increased demand of our licensing programme. We were incredibly blessed by the generosity of one of our funders who was happy to cover the purchasing costs. It is angels like this who lovingly pay it forward so we can continue to assist those in our community to obtain a license.

Amber Hohaia officially came on staff this financial year after being a contractor for six years. In addition to her position as a facilitator of women's and youth programmes, she took over the learner theory programme in three South Waikato high schools. From here she trained to be a certified driving instructor and a defensive driving instructor. This role will help take the pressure off Lamien and prepare us for our new venture as we branch out and develop our driving programme.

Our contract to provide theory and **driver training** for the South Waikato high schools has been so successful that we blew the KPI's out of the water. The need was far greater than we ever expected, and our success has run the account dry that was funding this project. Our service will continue for the next financial year but at a lower capacity. As a result, we had to say goodbye to our newest staff member Hori Wharepapa at the end of January. This was not what we were expecting but he leaves feeling loved and valued and ready for his next adventure. We wish him all the very best in this new season.

'We Care' community learner theory, driving lessons and holiday learners' programmes saw fifty-three local school leavers or adults engage. Even though we had to raise our prices due to increases in fuel and running costs for driving lessons, it has not deterred anyone making use of this service. We are still the cheapest providers in the South Waikato.

The Heavy Transport Licenses Class 2 and 4 were in such high demand over 2023 that we added an additional two Class 2 programmes to cater for this. The courses were fully booked way before commencement dates. The only cancellations were medical or for deferral of leave reasons. People signed up well in advance and were happy to sit on a wait-list or be transferred to the next programme. Class 2 saw thirty-three individuals attend, including eight Police and Volunteer Fire fighters. This is our way to help more first responders make our community safer. Sadly, only eleven people reported back that they had gained employment after these programmes.

Class 4 had ten graduate and eight either got promoted or found employment at this level. Others are waiting to hear if their applications for employment have been successful. The progression from Class 2 to 4 requires three to six months of logbook entries to qualify. For those unable to get Class 2 employment, it limits their ability to secure the requirements. The logbook credits also have a twelve-month expiry which further limits them should they not gain the adequate entries within that time frame. We are considering ways around this.

Funding permitting we are hopeful that defensive driving and forklift endorsements will be added to our repertoire of services in the new financial year. These are two services we get contacted about regularly.



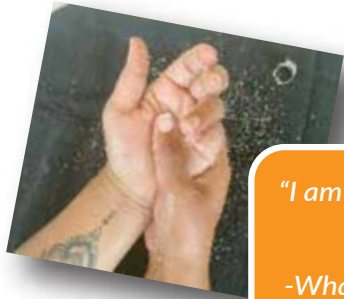
*"Grateful that I can apply for better employment to provide for my family."
Heavy Transport class 4 participant
(not pictured here)*

It has always been our desire to see Transform Aotearoa operate in other communities outside Putaruru. After many conversations and meetings behind the scenes, I am pleased to announce that in October the first session using the men's Te Kaupapa Whakamana (Empowering Men) programme took place at **Transform Bethlehem** at the Bethlehem Community Church Hall on Moffat Road.

Danny has committed to training volunteer facilitators over the next twelve months to adopt our heartbeat and make the programme their own. He has been tirelessly working with government organisations over there like Police, Probation, Corrections, and other organisations trying to build relationships like the ones we have in the South Waikato. Our local Sergeant Daniel Peat has been instrumental in pointing us in the right direction with these connections.

The Transform team is beyond excited that we have an opportunity to finally reach another community and see life change take place now in the Bay of Plenty. This dream has been a long time coming.

Other communities are currently communicating with us who would like to see our programmes help their people. One group has begun transporting clients from Te Awamutu to Putaruru every Wednesday for the men's and women's programmes, so they can participate until Transform can be established in their own region. This trust currently has a trainee facilitator sitting in on our lady's programme.



"I am better able to speak my mind and express my wants and needs positively."
-Whakahonohono Mai participant

In March, we sadly said goodbye to Haidee Kritzinger our CFO. She has done a fabulous job running the accounts and financially keeping us afloat. She will be greatly missed as she takes on other commitments. Gwen Bonnar has been employed to take her place and the transition has been seamless. She has an accounting background and brings her vast wealth of knowledge with her.

Journey our first Transform book is about to be published. This project has taken more than a year to complete. This task was designed to publish some of the wonderful stories of our Trust and the life change that happened during 2019/2020. It is a fundraising venture to help make up the shortfall of funding since covid. The goal is to publish the other years in the future. Keep your eyes open for the launch of this book to secure yourself a copy and maybe one for a friend.

A special thank you to every person, organisation and trust that has contributed in any way to the running of Transform this year. Without your assistance we simply could not have done what we have. It takes a village to make a difference and your part has been greatly appreciated. We hope that this partnership will continue for many years to come, so together we will continue to see hundreds of individual lives transformed in 2024 and beyond.

From the CEO - Howard Gould

Unity is not uniformity, and it is this diversity of character, skills and personalities that gives our team at Transform Aotearoa the wonderful team spirit we share as we look back on 2023 and journey into this new year.

In this Newsletter and the Heart-Warming Friday stories, you will read about many people that it has been our delight to help on their journey of discovery, to a "new normal" for themselves.

Whether it is gradual or happens very quickly, change has happened for them and what a privilege it is for us to work with such an amazing group of people, keen to see change happen in their lives and learn new tools to work with, as habits need changing, and relationships with family, employers, and community are built stronger and with purpose.

It is easy to treat people less fortunate than ourselves as having no value, but as we have seen, many diamonds are cut from rough looking stones. Society at large is an unwelcoming place with a variety of limitations placed on them, so we are very grateful for our local Police and Probation services who with confidence, refer their contacts to us and then share in our joy as we see them make such great progress.

Thank you so much to our family of diverse, supportive and regular funders who provide us with the resources to carry out the work of Transform Aotearoa in the community. We are indeed indebted to God and to you for this.



Building Awesome Whanau

From the Heart-Warming Friday Files

Value, purpose, and a destiny . . .

Lamen came back from Tokoroa with a big smile on his face saying, 'I have a story for you!' He had taken one of our ladies over to sit her full licence. She had said that she did not sleep the night before and was so nervous about sitting her test that she felt like she was going to be sick. Lamen had to calm her down by getting her to breathe deeply and take stock of the situation before getting in the car.

This lady had a tragic personal trauma a few years back and it was the downward spiral of her neglecting herself. However, since doing the women's programme at Transform she has slowly realised that she has value, purpose, and a destiny. She understands that she can be kind to herself without feeling guilty.

She passed her full and she told Lamen that it was the first time in a long time that she had really smiled, and it felt good. She said to him that it is time for her to look after herself.

I love it when this happens. There is nothing greater than seeing someone move from a place of bondage to a place of freedom. I really believe that this lady is ready to move forward and live her best life.



"Thank you for helping me to pass my learners."
-Drivers Licence participant

Serious passion . . .

Another young man who did his HT with us had moved away for a few years but has now returned home, he is fiercely passionate about volunteering for and driving the local fire trucks. His old location was not getting him the exposure he had hoped for. Now he is home he is desperate to fuel his passion and is insistent on living as close to the fire station as possible, to allow him the shortest route back to the station whenever the emergency siren calls. That is one serious passion to follow! A childhood dream, now a reality.



"I always thought I was a confident woman, but this program helped me see that some areas in my thinking, attitude and behaviours needed to change"
Te Moana Kura participant

Adventure of a lifetime . . .

We had a past student come back to say hello this week. It blesses my heart when they do this. People who have received so much from Transform who take the time to visit us and bring updates on their progress. She told me Transform changed her life, she was in a place where she had no clue 'who' she was anymore. She had isolated herself and did not want to stay there.

She got her learners with us, restricted and full, and said after doing our women's programs she became more open minded and a better mother. She attended the Barista course which gave her even more confidence. After graduating our programs, she gained employment and now is working in another town and recently got tipped and complemented on her fantastic customer service. She said her ability to speak confidently to others was a skill she gained at Transform.

She has many goals for the future and expressed that one was to be a truck driver and drive tanker trucks for Fonterra. I smiled and with a raised eyebrow informed her that I could help with that dream and the next program was in May. She sat in silence completely dumbfounded by my offer. I told her we could assist her up to the Class 4 and that she had what it takes to achieve all this by mid-November. With a grin on her face, she said 'thank you for having so much faith in me. I'm getting nervous and excited all at once and it's not until May.' She walked out my office door like she had just won the lottery. My guess is that this young woman is about to embark on an adventure of a lifetime.

Heavy Transport Class 4 Graduation



Different Direction . . .

Transform's staff love it when we have past students arrive unannounced to fill us in on where their lives are at now. A gentleman from 2018 appeared at the door eager to tell us he has not been in trouble with the law since; is working at the Salvation Army in another town; has his full license; and his own car. All huge milestones for this young man. Lamén described him as a quiet soul, and only gained enough confidence to share by the sixth session. You would never have thought so by the way he led our conversation. He promised to drop in again next time he was passing through. Seeing life change in others never gets boring in this job. Especially when they make enough changes to go in a completely different direction to the one, they were traveling when they first arrived. Knowing that Transform was a pivotal part in that process is incredibly uplifting.

Enthusiasm flowed . . .

At the men's programme Wednesday night one of the guys who was new last time shared with the others how when he first came, he did not want to but had a Court order that required his attendance. He said, Transform literally changed his life, he is back because he wants to be. He sung Transform's praises so much Lamén said to him, he sounded like a staff member, and he has only done one programme. His enthusiasm flowed over to other eight men attending and the comments afterwards were that this place is cool, and they will be back. It is exciting for our staff when clients are highly impacted by the material they learn and publicize how amazing the programme is to others. We treasure moments like these as we witness genuine appreciation and life change.

I owe Transform my life . . .

This week I had a call from one of our men I asked him for permission to use his story for a project I am working on and with a lot of passion in his voice said, "You can use what you like, I owe Transform my life"! He has made so many positive changes and continues to do so that he has become another one of our success stories of a life of crime to living the dream. It was immensely heart-warming to hear him give so much credit to Transform for his personal transformation.



*"I believe in myself now.
I have a positive future"
-ShineGIRL participant*

Line in the sand . . .

As staff we are always overjoyed when we hear how lives are changing around us. One of our beautiful ladies shared how she is currently free of addictive substances like meth and marijuana which she took daily. Realising now that these substances have stolen a decade of her life and she is determined that they are not going to take another one. She has drawn a permanent line in the sand. Her son has been her motivating force to get her life back on track.

Coming to Transform and being in a positive environment has helped her keep her resolve. The support she has received from staff and those closest to her has been invaluable. Breaking the chains now means she can have the future she has always dreamed of for her and her son. Our encouragement will remain as she continues her journey to wholeness.

What an inspiration this lady is. Making brave and determined steps that will not only change her own life but the life of her young son as well. We can see it in her eyes that she is adamant - this is her new normal.

It always warms our hearts when we see young people step up to the plate to take on responsibilities that in an ideal world would never fall on them. Beautiful people who do what they can to keep the family moving out of necessity. I can only imagine the celebrations in that house tonight.

Occasionally we hear stories like these that tug at the heart string more than others, it makes us more aware of the desperate needs within our community and we are thankful that we have the means to make their lives a little easier. It is a privilege to do what we do, being a light in this little rural town, our contribution just hit home a little deeper this week.



*"My entire trajectory has shifted and allowed me to heal."
-Whakahonohono Mai participant*



Step up to the plate . . .

One of our learner's license students who attended our course has a small window of opportunity to secure a license. With medically challenged family members, the burden has fallen on their shoulders to be the main transport person in the household. This dedicated soul has asked Amber to begin driving lessons immediately so that when the six months is over, they can immediately sit their restricted.

*If you would like to receive
Heart Warming Friday
stories in your inbox every Friday contact
kim@transformaotearoa.org.nz
to join our mailing list*



TRANSFORM AOTEAROA

Programs we offer

Womens Programs:

- Whakahonohono Mai
 - Te Moana Kura
 - Tū Māia
- Women Of Worth

Mens Programs:

- Te Kaupapa Whakamana
- Te Ana Raiona
- Mens Life Group

Community Programs:

- Te Reo
- Driver Licencing
- Heavy Transport Licencing
- Forklift Licencing
- Defensive Driving

Parenting and Whanau:

- Building Awesome Whānau
- Teenage Years

Youth Programs:

- ShineGIRL and STRENGTH

Our Supporters

We are extremely grateful to the individuals, trusts and community funders who financially support us, including:



Transform Aotearoa Charitable Trust is a registered charity. Our charities registration number is CC53205

www.transformaotearoa.org.nz