



Sunflower Sunday

International Day of Disabled Persons

Aucklanders turned Aotea Square into a field of sunflowers in support of the United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons.

Spectrum Care hosted Sunflower Sunday, a celebration of the International Day of People with Disabilities, on Sunday 2 December in Aotea Square. People chalked sunflowers on the square to show their support of people with disabilities.

International Day of Disabled Persons is a worldwide celebration designated by the United Nations and aims to promote an understanding and awareness of disability issues.

Throughout November, Spectrum Care worked on spreading the message of the day to Auckland schools through the creation of the Sunflower Quilt, a symbol of New Zealand's commitment to the care of our disabled people.

Students from five Auckland schools created illustrations of sunflowers which were sewn together to form the quilt which was presented to Audrey van Ryn, a United Nations representative, on Sunflower Sunday.

The school programme culminated in a visit by Auckland band Spacifix to Arohanui Special School where they helped the students complete their illustrations.

We would like to say a big thank you to Kate Sneddan, Charlotte Hanson and Sonja Tomovska from AUT who worked very hard on the event and the school initiative.

The quilt will be on display at Spectrum Care until March. After this, it will be displayed at the United Nations head office.



in this issue...

- Leadership Team Talk
- SOSCARS
- In the Spotlight: Deepika Sarpal
- 'Consumers Own' Newsletter
- Welfare Guardianship Presentation
- 007 Ball
- A parent's experience of Spectrum Care

Leadership Team Talk

After just a short time as Spectrum Care's Chief Executive, this is my first opportunity to share my reflections on how we are doing and what the future may hold for us. I have greatly appreciated the very warm welcomes that I have received wherever I have been, including of course the magnificent powhiri on my first day. I have very quickly become aware that I am but one member of a very large team of highly committed staff, and the new title of this editorial column 'Leadership Team Talk', recognises my intention that future editions of 'Across the Spectrum' will include contributions from all members of Spectrum Care's Leadership Team.

A great deal has been achieved by Spectrum Care over the past 13 years. The quality of the homes I have visited is extraordinary. More importantly, the quality of the relationships between the people we support and our staff is remarkable in terms of our staff's genuine aroha, compassion and commitment. This is not 'just a job' for the large majority of staff I have met. Their hearts and souls are touched by the people they work with on a daily basis and the depth of caring extends to a space that is reserved most often only for closest family members.

My experience of Spectrum Care so far, affirms the enormous leadership potential of our organisation within the disability sector. Ultimately, the quest to create a strong sense of purpose and opportunity for the people we serve is at the core of our focus. That requires highly committed and innovative staff, supportive families and the trust and confidence of the people who use our services. Spectrum Care has many untapped opportunities to fully engage in the networks that link the parts of the community that build the potential for the people we support to live great lives. This will require robust and trusting relationships with families, a strong understanding of the unique needs, rights and capacities of people we support and a thorough knowledge of the community resources that may unlock the often hidden potential of people who use our services.



The needs of families and the rights of people who use our services require ongoing attention. Greater efforts will be made by staff to attend to the concerns of family members and improvements will be monitored through regular family satisfaction surveys. As part of our ongoing commitment to the people we support we have engaged with the Director of Advocacy Services and reached an agreement that will support regular visits to houses and services by Health and Disability Advocates. This additional service will support the opportunity for the rights of people who use our services to be more regularly monitored and considered in the context of service planning and delivery. We welcome this ongoing independent view of our services, which can only help improve our service performance, and also highlight the many great things that are already happening.

We will also be renewing our focus on our Outcomes initiative. This will include enhancing our staff's understanding and practice of supporting people to achieve their goals and aspirations so that they all have opportunities to live great lives.

While there is much that Spectrum Care can do with current resources, our success ultimately depends on the adequacy of government contracting and funding models. Spectrum Care is committed to meeting the expectations created by the NZ Disability

Strategy, but along with other organisations, risks having this frustrated as a result of diminishing capacity to adequately reward staff for the work we expect them to do. It is my intention that Spectrum Care will take a leadership role in ensuring that this sector-wide issue is articulated and addressed, thereby ensuring continuing opportunities for people with intellectual disability, and/or autism spectrum disorder, to live ordinary, if not great, lives.

Finally, greater recognition of the unique needs of people we support from Maori, Pacific Island, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds, will be a significant focus for the future. Spectrum Care is truly fortunate to have a wide representation of staff across many cultures and the celebration of cultural differences was fully realised at my welcoming powhiri. The further enhancement of this capacity will require careful and sensitive attention to the needs of staff, people we support and the cultural leaders in the wider community.

I am really looking forward to working with the leadership team, staff, people we support and the wider community of Spectrum Care supporters, to realise the great potential that this organisation holds for the future.

Chris Harris
Chief Executive

SOSCARS

SOSCARS is Spectrum Care's annual staff award ceremony, and is a celebration of our staff and their commitment to the people we support. The 2007 event was held at the Onehunga Workingmen's Club on Friday 30 November and was a great night which was enjoyed by all.

Outstanding Community Support Worker - Sharron Attwood

This award recognises the people in our organisation who have the most significant and direct influence on the daily experiences of the people we support. Sharron Attwood has worked with Spectrum Care for about seven years. Both her House Leader and Service Coordinator nominated her. She has been described as a passionate, committed and person-centred team player. The fact that Sharron has had to overcome her own special challenges in life makes her achievements all the more impressive. She has made an outstanding contribution to people with intellectual disabilities living great lives.



Outstanding House Leader - Frances Henderson

Frances Henderson is another long term staff member. She is described as 100% committed to the Values of Spectrum Care. Someone who knows her well describes her as hugely organised, great fun and a fantastic cook. Her work is valued to such an extent that this year she was headhunted to help out with a new house that was experiencing some major challenges. It goes without saying that she did a great job.



Outstanding Support Role: Sunflower Hub - Maria Dickson and Tim Dutta

This award is for the people who work in support roles within the organisation. Staff members who work in areas such as Quality, Accounts, Property and the Behaviour Support Team don't often have direct contact with our service users but they are critical components of the organisation nonetheless. That diversity made it difficult to choose one winner so the judges have opted for two winners of this year's award. Tim Dutta (Property Coordinator) and Maria Dickson (Recruitment Officer) both provide an excellent standard of service. Customer service is their hallmark and both winners are admired because of their absolute dedication.



Cultural Award - Angela Marsden

Angela Marsden has done a wonderful job of connecting one of our service users with his culture and community. She has built cultural connections that extend from his home environment to his local Pacific Island church, where he is an active participant. As a result this service user is now in touch with other Pacific Islanders and loves the contact. Spectrum Care is about creating meaningful lives and Angela has gone a long way to achieving that.

Supreme Award for Service Excellence - Lynette Jones

The Plaque of Excellence celebrates an outstanding individual effort in modelling and achieving the Vision, Mission and Values of the organisation. Lynette Jones has been described as hugely dedicated, an innovator and a role model. She has worked tirelessly on behalf of the people we support and has created an environment that encourages choice and empowerment. According to her Service Coordinator, she is always looking at ways to add adventure, fun and creative development for the people she supports.



Outstanding Service Coordinator - Mia Barr

Mia is an extraordinary Service Coordinator, who has the ability to not only manage tasks, but to positively touch staff, service users and their families. Her Service Manager says that Spectrum Care is lucky to have such a professional and able person work for them, someone who leads by example and represents Spectrum's Mission, Vision and Values. She is described as professional, energetic, enthusiastic and eager for a challenge. Her calm persona pervades all that she does and her sensitivity, compassion and huge commitment makes her an ideal candidate for a SOSCAR. She has been able to achieve great outcomes in some challenging homes.



In the Spotlight: Deepika Sarpal

One of the first things you notice when you enter the Sarpals' house is the pictures on the wall. They are in every room and brightly coloured.

Deepika Sarpal is 19 years old and is a budding artist. She also has an intellectual disability and is supported by Spectrum Care's Home Support team.

In 2005, Deepika was in hospital for some time. It was during this period that she started drawing and painting. Now she draws most days.

Firstly, she thinks about a picture and has an idea of what it will look like in her head. Then she sketches a rough picture and afterwards she draws it again, sometimes smaller.

"Sketching is easy," she says, "but I like painting. The colours are pretty. I first use pencil colours, then paints."

She copies some pictures, others she draws from her head. There are also many geometric patterns and designs in her large collection of work.

Spectrum Care artists will have the opportunity to showcase their talents at an Arts Awards in March 2008. For more information on the awards, please contact the Aspirations Service Coordinators on 09 634 3790.



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'Consumers Voice' Newsletter

A recent addition to Spectrum Care's publications is 'Consumers Voice' - a newsletter for service users by service users. Published bi-monthly it plans to connect and inform Spectrum Care service users on a variety of issues.

The first issue included an article on a recent excursion by two ladies from Spence House to Orewa. It also had jokes, a recipe and notices on upcoming events. Future publications will include general interest

stories, items for sale or wanted, events and artwork by service users.

The goal is to involve those people who have the ability and interest in being part of the team so that they can participate fully in the newsletter's formation. Eventually it will be totally in the hands of the service users with the support of Spectrum staff. Copies of the newsletter can be obtained through Helen Mulford (Advocate) on 634 3790 ext 312.

Welfare Guardianship Presentation

This presentation will be given by the Public Trust.

Date: Wednesday 27 February

Time: 6pm - 7:30pm

Venue: Pohutukawa Room, 270 Neilson St, Onehunga, Auckland

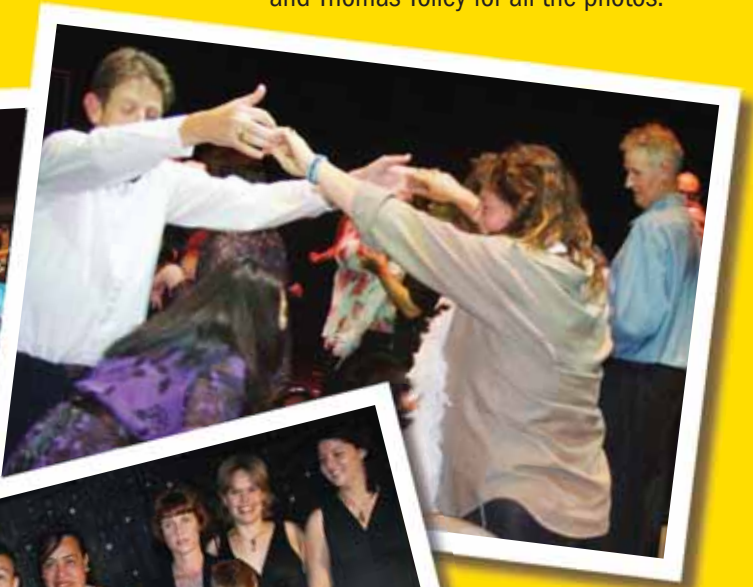
There will be light refreshments following the presentation and everyone is welcome to ask questions.

For more information please contact Helen Mulford (Advocate) on 634 3790 ext 312.

2007

Spectrum Care Ball

The 007 Ball was held at the Bruce Mason Centre in October and everyone had a great time. Thank you to Telecom for the ongoing sponsorship and support, and to Nora Butler and Thomas Tolley for all the photos.



A parent's experience of Spectrum Care

Sharon Barber placed her son, Josh, in a Spectrum Care house two years ago, and she is very happy with the way things have turned out. However, moving Josh to residential care was not an easy decision for her.

Josh is 12 years old. He is severely autistic and is non-verbal. He can be aggressive and doesn't sleep well.

Before moving to Baker house, Josh was living at home with his parents and sister in Warkworth. Sharon had given up her job to stay home to look after him, and her husband was working from home so he could give her as much support as possible.

"It was a struggle with him as he got bigger," said Sharon. "We love our boy dearly, but we couldn't cope."

There was no respite nearby and not much support. "We managed to get some respite through Spectrum Care but it's a long drive to Beach Haven from Warkworth."

Eventually, the Barbers realised that they needed more support to take care of Josh and decided to find out more about placing him in residential care."

"It just got too much. We were stretched to our limits emotionally, financially and physically. Josh didn't sleep. I was exhausted and we just couldn't manage any longer."

"It was a big step for us and it was a really hard decision. We are a very close family."

All the funding applications went through, and Josh was to be placed in Baker House.

"I immediately relaxed when I walked in," said Sharon. "It felt comfortable. If I hadn't gotten a good feeling about it, there's no way I would have left him there."

Since Josh has been with Spectrum Care, things have improved considerably. His behaviours have settled and a sleep programme means he usually sleeps through the night. He is more involved with the community and he is progressing socially.

Previously, he was obese, but he now has lost weight and is looking much healthier.

"It's turned our whole family around. When Josh comes home it's quality time and we

all love it. We know he likes it at Baker House – he always lets you know if he's unhappy. He's always happy to go back after he's being home for the weekend.

"The staff are lovely and I do feel like it's a family. Josh is surrounded by all these people who really care about him. The change of shifts means there's always someone fresh and rested to be with him, which is something we could never achieve at home.

"We are very grateful to Spectrum Care and the staff at Baker House for taking such good care of Josh."

If you have a story about your experiences of Spectrum Care which you would like to share, please contact Roxanne on 634 3790 ext 326.



Free Subscription

'Across the Spectrum' is aimed at celebrating the achievements of individuals with an intellectual disability as well as promoting awareness and understanding of disability issues. If you would like to receive 'Across the Spectrum' regularly, or know of anyone who you think would benefit from a copy then please let us know. 'Across the Spectrum' is mailed out quarterly.

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