



Hi to our neighbours in the city

We've been here in the city for 40 years and everyday our staff at Downtown Community Ministry work with people you see out and about in the city. They go by a bunch of names – some people call them 'the homeless', others refer to them as 'streeties', some have their own individual nickname like 'blanket man'. Quite a few of these people are in pretty bad shape; some can be a real nuisance at times; others just want to get on with their own lives.

We see our job as trying to help those people put their lives back together. Each of them has got a story to tell so this newsletter is to show you a snapshot of the lives behind those people. As these brave real-life stories demonstrate those stories are often tragic.

Because we are your neighbours we want to tell you about the positive work that's going on around you in the city.

Homeless World Cup

The journey is nearly complete for a group of unlikely soccer stars about to travel to represent New Zealand at the Homeless Football World Cup.

Wellington and Auckland players with recent experience with homelessness have been attending practice each week to prepare for a real world cup.

The competition pits teams of people from all around the world, in a football tournament played not in huge stadiums, but on the street. It has real benefits too. Overseas, players report a new motivation for life and increased social interaction. Nearly half of them have improved their housing situation and just over a third have secured regular employment.

Two DCM service users are members of the team and have loved being a part of the team's progress. Willie Matangi, a self confessed 'all-rounder' at the game because he believes he can be in all places at once, says, "It's been absolutely fantastic. My confidence is up and I'm looking to the future".

However, Willie may face visa barriers, because of historic convictions, that prevent him even going to the tournament. "I've been inside for 17 years so I'm not getting too excited. But if I don't get to go it's already been better than I ever thought," he says.

DCM Outreach Worker Kate Bell says, "Our fingers are crossed that he'll get to go. His commitment and attitude has been outstanding".

The tournament takes place in Melbourne in early December.



The Wellington squad at a training camp



Willie at footy practice



Willie Matangi hangs out with Norm Hewitt and Winton Rufer

ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT LIFE

The smile on her face says it all. Debbie Leyland is looking ahead and enthusiastic about life for the first time in a long while.



This year, Debbie has worked at DCM stocking the food bank and attending to general cleaning duties around the office.

"If you'd told me a year ago that I'd be in employment I'd have said you were crazy. But here I am for the first time in 20 years holding down a real job," she says.

DCM Director Stephanie McIntyre says, "Debbie volunteered with us last year and showed so much application and focus in her work we just had to employ her".

Debbie joined DCM's Street People Project (a banking and money management service) almost three years ago and shares a similar background to the people we work with. Many have experienced physical or sexual abuse, drug or alcohol addiction, time in prison, mental health issues and homelessness.

Debbie says she came to Wellington when she was 23 and got into the drugs scene. "I was dealing drugs for a living but after only three years into it I got nicked and got put away for 18 months.

"After getting out I was lucky to find some work filing for a lawyer in the city. But my drinking got out hand and it soon grew from being a casual habit to a serious problem and before I knew it I was an alcoholic.

"I started to put everything I had into buying more and more alcohol and very soon I had nothing left to pay my rent. So I started

dossing on people's couches anywhere I could. But I became so possessive of the drink that I couldn't be around others because they'd want me to share it with them. So I moved out onto the streets for two years."

Debbie then received assistance from DCM to get her benefit sorted and help to find a flat.

"The help I got from all DCM staff was great. They have always been so supportive and non-judgemental towards me. They've showed empathy and I've never felt belittled. All along I've been treated as a real person. I just can't believe how things have changed for me."

Debbie connects being settled into a flat and getting benefit assistance as critical to her controlling her drinking and finding some focus in life.

"I've been able to focus on more important things like my children. I have an adult son and a daughter who's 15. Now, a lot of my time is spent trying to sort things out for her.

"I am feeling contentment in life and have hope for the future. I have never felt this way before but it's true."

No Plan B

Sent into foster care at age six and living in a house rife with alcohol and drugs, DCM service user Michael Ogden had a rough start. What follows is his story and where he finds himself now.

After being fostered into his Aunt's home at the age of six because of an alcoholic parent Michael says each night he would receive beatings by older cousins in the home. "I was the black sheep of the family and no one wanted me there," he says.

To this day the abuse still haunts him and means he prefers to sleep in the living area of this flat where he says he's better able to hear anyone approaching.

The house was a centre for drugs and alcohol and drunken parties were held almost every weekend. Michael could get drugs from his cousins at home or his best friend at high school who dealt drugs in the playground.

Now, he's drug free and says he's managed to stay clean for the last six years.

After leaving school at 16 Michael came to Wellington and found work at a supermarket. Although young, he was a heavy drinker and had begun to gamble too. He soon ran out of money and left for Palmerston North.

For the next seven years Michael worked as a kitchen hand in various

restaurants around town. But being unable to control his drinking he was put into rehab. When he got out he decided to pursue living in the big city again.

This time Michael found kitchen work in some of city's popular restaurants and hotels but his gambling habit grew and also his belief that he could find riches.

"I tried to win big on the pokies and I poured a lot of money into it but lost it all so I got kicked out of my place in the hostel."

He began sleeping on the streets and juggling his hospitality work as well.

"Some of the spots I slept in were in amongst the trees and shrubs of the gardens around the city streets. Sometimes days would go past without me being able to sleep."

He was assisted at the soup kitchen by the Sisters of Compassion to get into the night shelter, staying for a year, and keeping up his restaurant work.

"But I was spending all the money I had on the pokies and on alcohol and soon I couldn't even afford to stay there."



His boss intervened and supported Michael into rehab again up in Hawkes Bay. When he returned contact was made with DCM.

"DCM helped me find a place to live. They also gave me the support I needed with my financial affairs and to get back into work. They showed me how to manage my money better so my expenses were accounted for and left me with something spare.

"Doing this has slowly weaned me off the desire to gamble. I hate it now. Walking through Courtenay Place is so horrible because I am tempted there and I don't want to go back to the way I was.

"I've also been working with DCM on a plan for my future. Knowing there are people supporting me makes me feel positive about the future. It has recently led me to into getting a part-time job.

"I never had a plan B when things went wrong with me. Now I'm a bit wiser and I've learnt things I can do to help me not go down that road again."

Counting the Cost – Housing First Works

Social policy makers around the world now agree that solving homelessness is not only possible but it's more cost effective than continuing with current approaches.

Preliminary results from a Committee for Auckland study of six people show that \$1.5m of government funding and services went towards their support over a five year period. One of the six received approximately \$330,000. The result of this support – all six people remained homeless for another five years.

America, Australia and the UK are all developing policies to eradicate homelessness and in Wellington, our work at DCM follows international best practice.

Malcolm Gladwell, author of the international bestseller *The Tipping Point*, promoted radical investment in the way homelessness was addressed in his 2006 article, *Million Dollar Murray*.

Published in the New Yorker magazine the article stressed that costs associated with managing homelessness were far more than the cost of programmes of support that didn't actually house people.

Gladwell calculated the cost to the tax payer of managing the issues associated with long-term rough sleeper and chronic alcoholic, Murray Barr. The numerous hospital stays, detox treatments, mental health clinic costs, welfare benefits, case worker expenses, prison stays, doctor's costs, emergency housing costs etc were tallied up over the 10 years of his homelessness and came to a whopping \$1 million.

The approach Downtown Community Ministry takes to address homelessness includes the same underlining philosophy as policy makers are now beginning to advocate. This is a *housing first* strategy that prioritises housing people most in need and then providing wrap around services to keep them housed.

In practice this means people are housed in a Wellington City Council, Housing New Zealand or private flat and given essential support such as community and mental health liaison, budgeting advice, benefit advocacy, food bank parcels and visits by outreach workers.

DCM Director Stephanie McIntyre says, "This approach works. High numbers of the people we have housed and

HOUSING FACTS

Between 1st September 2007 and 30 September 2008:

- 54 people were housed in permanent accommodation
- 338 home visits were made, and,
- 25 people were housed from rough sleeping on streets and/or vehicles.

"For many years Downtown Community Ministry has been a leader and an innovator in the provision of social services. Their advocacy for people in need is outstanding as is the commitment of their staff and volunteers.

"Project Margin, the Street People Project and the foodbank are essential services and Wellington would be the poorer without them. I'm proud to be part of a Council that partners with this leading organisation to eradicate poverty and social exclusion in Wellington."

Iona Pannett, Wellington City Councillor (Lambton Ward)

"DCM serves that group in our community who for whatever reason have 'fallen by the wayside', thus require extra assistance and guidance, and DCM gives exactly that. Some might say that in a country such as ours this role should not be necessary but the reality is that even in the most well endowed and caring society some people just can't make it. However, it is exactly because Wellington wishes to be a caring community that such a response to these people must be readily available: whenever, wherever and whoever – DCM is such a response, giving practical yet sensitive support in difficult circumstances, and is to be warmly thanked accordingly for that dedicated work. Please give it what assistance you can."

Ian McKinnon, Deputy Mayor

supported with multi-faceted services have gone on to become less dependent on emergency health services and face fewer arrests by police."

A recent study in America covered 39 men experiencing homelessness. Over five years they spent a combined 15,000 days in prison, costing \$2.6 million when their arrests and ambulance callouts were included. The majority of their arrests were for trespassing, public intoxication and other liquor violations.

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Faithful Volunteer

Life is never simple when you spend the greater part of your youth growing up within state institutions.

For Te Amo Roberts the experience led him to a dependency on alcohol. Even though he comes from a large family, with many brothers and sisters, most of his adult life has been alone.

His battle with alcohol has seen him in and out of rehabilitation facilities and sometimes in trouble with the police. He acknowledges the trouble alcohol got him into and the destructive way he used drink.

"I drank so much one time I threw a huge rubbish bin through a shop window. All the time I used to drink, drink, drink," he says.

Despite such a difficult past he still manages to keep his flat immaculately clean and tidy.

DCM has benefited from Te Amo's enthusiasm for our annual Book Fair fundraiser.

Director Stephanie McIntyre says, "Te Amo has been a faithful volunteer for DCM. We appreciate his commitment and warm spirit.

"His volunteering for us provides him with a genuine opportunity to socialise healthily and gives him a place of belonging within the DCM community."

Bulletin

DCM's weekly Bulletin is the best way to stay in touch with life at DCM. Subscribe by sending an email to bulletin@dcm.org.nz with "subscribe" in the subject line.

Volunteer!

Over 100 volunteers help DCM with our Bookfair, Food Day and weekly bread pick-ups. If you want to volunteer please give us a call!

Donations

You can shave \$1.00 off your income tax for every \$3.00 you donate to DCM. Rather than making the occasional one-off donation you may wish to consider making a smaller, but more regular, donation to DCM through an automatic payment.

This is particularly helpful for DCM as it gives us a steady income which we can rely on. You will receive an official receipt for tax purposes each financial year. For authority forms for a regular automatic payment, drop in to the office, phone, write or see www.dcm.org.nz/help.html



**Downtown
Community
Ministry**

Downtown Community Ministry gives down to earth support to individuals and families and speaks out on social issues affecting the people we work with.

- we work with homeless people
- we provide support and advocacy for people with benefit and other problems
- we act as benefit agent for people who don't have, or can't manage, a bank account
- we provide community worker support for low income families and individuals
- we operate a food bank
- we develop new services and projects in response to needs

DCM is supported by the wider community and our member churches – St Peter's Anglican, Wesley Methodist, St Andrew's and St John's Presbyterian, the Society of Friends and St Joseph's Catholic.

We are also grateful for financial support from the following organisations:

- Wellington City Council
- JR McKenzie Trust
- TG Macarthy Trust
- St John's Trust Karori
- Community Organisations Grants
- Ministry of Social Development
- Ngaio Union Church
- Sargood Bequest



The following companies have generously contributed to DCM events and work since the last issue of *Active in the City*:

- Café L'affaire ■ New World Metro ■ New World Wellington City
- Pandoro Bakery ■ Unilever Petone

DCM would also like to acknowledge Archetype and Prestige Print for all their help in producing this issue of *Active in the City*.

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Counting the Cost

"The study concluded that if a housing first model had been in place, hundreds of thousands of dollars would have been saved. For eight of the men who found housing during the study period the cost of arrests and prison time dropped 57%.

"It's a wise choice to invest in housing the homeless. It's cost effective, it frees up essential police and health resources, gets people off the street and supports people to turn their lives around. That's something we can all be proud of."

Sign up to our weekly news bulletin. Send an email to bulletin@dcm.org.nz

Feel free to copy material in this newsletter with due acknowledgement to:

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**Downtown
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Ministry**

Can You Help?

Yes I would like to help DCM:

- I enclose a donation for \$
- I would like to make a donation for general services
- Please debit \$ from my credit card (details below)

Full name

Address

Card number:

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