

New Teen Parenting Programme!

by Marion Spicer, Service Delivery Manager

Teen Parents. What does that phrase conjure up in people's minds? I asked a very young mum what happens when people see her walking down the street with her baby. She replied, "They look at the baby, and then they look at me". I asked what she thought they were thinking, and she said, "They most probably hope I'm the baby's sister". When I heard these words, it struck me that I think that too. When I see someone so terribly young with a tiny baby, my heart lurches and I just hope that the both of them will be ok. Sometimes our teen mums seem impossibly young and we worry for their babies.



A little one gets her hands into homemade playdough.

At Iosis, we decided that the time was right to do something about it, so at the end of May, we started our first Teen Parenting Programme. It's held for a few hours on a Thursday morning and is an opportunity for these very young parents to come to a space that is non-judgemental; a caring environment that will allow them to be themselves and pick up some tips. All of these young women feel like everyone's "out to get them", and we think it's necessary to show them that this

is not always the case, and then equip them with some skills to be great mothers, and help them to create an environment that is best for their babies.

Our teen parents are a delight to work with, they have a resilience that allows them to survive. For most of them, this is the only group they come to - their social isolation means they don't engage with others as they should when their needs are so high and they are so vulnerable. We've already seen a change in some of the mothers saying they feel stronger and more connected. Not to mention the fact that they've dragged their teenage male partners along as well! We think this is great progress!

We are so fortunate to have great volunteers and supporters of our programme and thank everyone who has donated time and resource to it. ■



Volunteer Linda demonstrates how to make an easy pizza snack with scone mix for only a few dollars.

What does 'Iosis' mean?

"Iosis" is a Greek word indicating the process whereby a base metal becomes gold. It is a miraculous transformation and it is our inspiration. We believe strongly in the power of transformation in people's lives; that despite the challenges they face, we know they can make significant changes for the sake of their children. We are committed to providing a set of practical support and learning processes to encourage, educate and come alongside families who are struggling to change habits of violence, addiction and offending to help them create a safe and secure environment for the children.



Clare, one of our volunteers helps the kids make homemade playdough.

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Message from the CEO

There have been some alarming statistics that have come to light recently, which have stirred up my conviction about the importance of the work we do, especially the work at Merivale.

Did you hear that over the last year three times as many babies have been taken from their mothers in the first few days of life as the same time period last year? I was also recently quite shocked to realise that only 16% of children who go into foster care, are ever returned back to the parents they were removed from.

It is well documented that those who end up in foster care have generally dismal social outcomes. They fill our prisons, our mental health institutions, the ranks of the unemployed and every other poor social statistic. This sharpened our sense that what we are doing is so vitally important. We have a real focus on giving high needs families every opportunity to maintain the care of their children and avoid the awful outcome of having their children removed from them.

Our work at Merivale is sharply focussed on families who either have already lost children into care and the programme enables them to be safely reunited with their parent(s), or those who would lose children into care if they did not do the programme.

We also work in the community with families in Manurewa and Clendon who are at risk of losing their children. Our work is highly successful, and we celebrate each child who is now safely at home with their family because of the work they have done in partnership with us.



Ruby Duncan

Thanking you for your partnership in this work,

A handwritten signature in white ink on a dark background, which appears to read 'Ruby Duncan'.

Ruby Duncan, CEO

More on Teen Parents

New Zealand ranks 19th out of 21 developed countries for having the highest teen pregnancy rate in a study done by Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson published in their book, *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* (Penguin, UK, 2009). That's a grim outlook for New Zealand. It means there are only 2 countries doing worse than us.

Times have changed and it's much more common for young unwed couples to have babies. Here at Iosis, we think it's essential that someone step in and walk alongside these young parents as they often have not been parented well themselves.

We believe our new Teen Parenting Programme fills a gap that other work in our area doesn't fill. We are hoping that as we discover these young parents' greatest challenges and needs, we will be better able to become an agency that stands alongside them to help them overcome their challenges, and create a stable environment in which to raise their children.

So far we've discovered that 1) these parents genuinely want to do a good job of parenting their children and 2) they have many obstacles to overcome, mainly to find people to take them and their concerns seriously.

Their biggest barrier is feeling disconnected and trying to find out how best to connect and make steps towards positive things.

We intend to keep running the group, and even as we go, develop more a more specialised approach to meeting these young parents' needs. We even have hopes of creating a part-time role that specifically works with these young people. However, as much of a need that it is, funding is in short supply at this time and it would cost us approximately \$40,000 for the role. If this is something that you feel as passionate about as we are, we'd love to have your partnership in this venture. ■

Keeping Children and Mothers Together

You've heard this message from us a hundred times, but we keep bringing it up because it even blows us away and we think it's phenomenally important.

Here's the deal: In this country, nearly 3,200 children are taken off their parents every year*. Only 16% of these children are ever returned to their parents' care.

It tells us that there's good reason for the kids to be removed and put somewhere safe, but it's a sad indictment on our society and our ability to help whole families to overcome their challenges.

As a stark contrast to the dismal 16% that are returned, every year in our Merivale Programme between 80% and



*Between July 2009 and June 2010, Child, Youth and Family received nearly 125,000 notifications, which found: 12,500 cases of emotional abuse, 4,400 cases of neglect, 2,900 cases of physical abuse and 1,200 cases of sexual abuse. Nearly 3,200 children were taken into CYF custody. (<http://christiansocialservices.blogspot.com>)

**www.stuff.co.nz/taranaki-daily-news/news/4726256/Child-abuse-worker-arrives 22/05/2011

“Every year in our Merivale programme between 80% and 95% of mothers that go through the programme retain care of their children.”

95% of mothers that go through the programme actually retain the care of their children! They are either reunited after being separated, or stay together as a preventative measure. We think this is very profound. It's something to celebrate, but also something to embrace and in the face of a severe shortage of finances, we really want to embrace it while we still can.

Over the remainder of the year we will be focussing our news quite heavily on Merivale so we can bring you more stories of hope, of mothers who overcome

all odds and the depravity of their upbringing for the sake of their children. We look forward to bringing you these stories and hope that you will continue to partner with us as we move forward.

Any financial support that can go towards our Merivale programme will help it to stay functioning during these hard times, and we are quite eager to see what wonderful distance it will go into the future. ■

*“There are more than 340 notifications and 57 confirmed serious abuse and neglect cases every day. That's 2,400 reports of child abuse and neglect every week in New Zealand.”***

New MenD Facilitator

We haven't forgotten about our Dads either... we have filled a long standing need for an additional men's programme facilitator. Rob Francis has started with us this month and is already helping John with the overflow of men that we have needing the programme. He has also taken on the role of following up all the Manurewa family violence calls from the Police. It's great work and we are very privileged to have Rob on board!



■ Please consider becoming a regular supporter of Iosis Family Solutions. With your donation, we can help so many more families!

It's easy! Simply complete the donation card included and return it to us in the free-post envelope, or go online to our website, www.iosis.org.nz and click 'Donate'.

Thank you for your support!

Thanks to our Sponsors

We would like to thank the below funders for their generous donation this month:

- Cuesports Foundation



- Nautilus Foundation



Contributors

Iosis Family Solutions is very grateful to the below organisations for their donations:

- ASB Trust
- New Zealand Lottery Grants
- Childhaven Trust
- The Strathlachlan Fund
- Caleb No 2 Trust
- John Mitchell Mclachlan Charitable Trust
- Community Response Fund
- Springhill Trust & Frimley Foundation
- Wilberforce 21 Trust
- Four Winds Foundation
- Alpha Charitable Trust
- Manukau Community Foundation
- Baptist Children's Trust



Julie, our Community Services Manager in our Supervised Contact area complete with new basketball hoop and picnic table care of Cuesports Foundation.

Sponsors

Iosis Family Solutions is very grateful to the below organisations for their support:

- Zeald.com for our website.
- Drury Kiwanis

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