

# WHAT'S UP AT THUMBS UP?

## Message from Service Manager

Issue 19

Sept 2014



Kia Ora friends, families and supporters of Thumbs Up,

It is with sadness that I write this last note for the Thumbs Up newsletter.

My time working with Thumbs Up has been full of love and laughter and I am grateful to the Board, families, staff and young people of Thumbs Up for allowing me the opportunity to come into the service and walk beside you all on your journeys for a short time. Thumbs Up is an amazing service that will always hold a special place in my heart. I feel truly honoured to have been able to come into Thumbs Up at a time of growth and exciting developments. The team came together in a very inspiring way, and together with the young people who attend and the families who support us tirelessly, we were able to do many great things over the last couple of years.

When I think back over my time at the service, some highlights include the Jolt Dance performance, the Thumbs Up disco and the celebration in November 2013. We had much fun at events like the Christmas party and many many moments of laughter each and every day. I have had the pleasure of creating relationships with some of the coolest young people I have ever met. Every day you inspire me and I want to challenge each of you to keep pushing those boundaries and knocking down any barriers others may put in your way. You are all intelligent, capable and uniquely special people and I will miss seeing your smiling faces everyday although I will definitely be coming in for regular visits!

To the staff of Thumbs Up, I would like to say a huge thank you! I cannot stress enough how proud and grateful I am to all of you. I feel extremely lucky to have been able to work alongside such a dedicated and passionate team of people. Thank you to the families of Thumbs Up who have been so encouraging and supportive of me throughout my time here. Thank you to the Board of Trustees who gave me the opportunity and then supported me endlessly the whole way through.

I am very happy to be handing the management reigns over to Laura Vonk, who I know will continue with the good work of the service.

Thanks & kind regards to you all!

Briany Howes



## Thank you and farewell to Briany

We are very grateful for the inspiring leadership that Briany has provided for Thumbs Up since she took up the manager role in January 2013.

Briany has earned our respect and appreciation for her empathy, management skills and ability to build warm and positive relationships with the people she works with and others in the community.

Briany resigns as manager on October 3. We wish Briany all the best and hope that she will stay in touch with all her friends at Thumbs Up!



Art work—Stained glass effect collage—displayed on our window

## Welcome to Laura Vonk, Thumbs Up's new manger



Laura will be taking the helm at Thumbs Up from the beginning of October.

Thumbs Up families and staff welcome Laura Vonk as the new manager of Thumbs Up. Laura will take up the position of manager on October 6th. Laura has worked at Thumbs Up as a supporter worker since March this year.

Laura originally comes from Holland, where she gained a Master of Science degree in Ecology. Research projects included three months of fieldwork on an island in the Panama Canal, and four months in South Africa. She has worked as an ecological adviser for the Dutch National Council, a Facilitator of Human Rights Education, and been involved in organic farming. Alongside these scientific interests, Laura has had a longstanding passion for working with people with disabilities and mental illness, and empowering them to reach their full potential. She has worked 5 years as a facilitator/host at a centre for people with mental illnesses in Holland and a year working as a Vocational Facilitator and Nursery Facilitator at Avalon, a provider of services for people with disabilities in Tauranga. Hobbies include music, theatre, tramping, sailing, woodwork and reading.

### In Memory of Barney

Family and other important people in Barney's life, including friends from Argo Trust and Kimi Ora School, joined us at Thumbs Up on June 18 to sing some of Barney's favourite songs and unveil a miniature Pohutakawa tree planted in the Thumbs Up garden in Barney's memory.



### Mayor of Lower Hutt visits

Thumbs Up welcomed His Worship Ray Wallace on September 10.

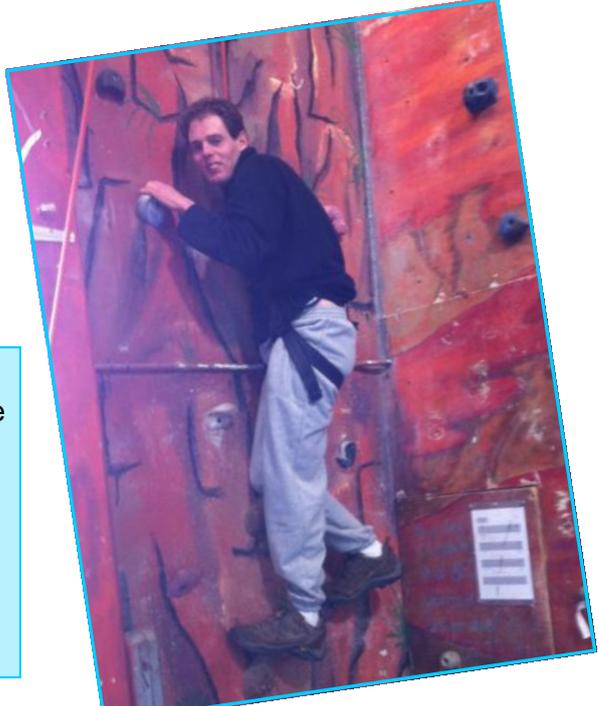
During his visit the mayor participated in a music session led by John Paul, our music therapist. We started off with a hello song, in which everyone sang "Hello to Ray"! More songs followed and instruments were handed out. Here's Sacha and his friend providing some percussion!



Thank you to **Muzzy Shirts** for giving us such a good deal for the purchase of our cool Thumbs Up hoodies!



**What we have been doing at Thumbs Up in term 2**



Learning new recreational skills like roller skating, rock climbing, and Farmers golf—a Dutch game!



Delivering Meals on Wheels

...and helping others in our community.



Folding napkins at Britannia House

## Contact details

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The Mad Hatters, 2nd place team at our quiz and games night fundraiser.

Thank you to all who came and supported our Thumbs Up quiz and games night fundraiser held on August 16th. We raised \$2100 towards the snow/ski trip planned for winter 2015.

We also thank the following organisations that generously donated products or vouchers for prizes.

Shott Beverages	t-leaf T
AlSCO Cleaning	Ripe Coffee
Burger King	Event Cinemas
Pauline Prentice	McDonalds
Whittakers Chocolates	Pak n Save
Michael Barnes	Coral McAdam
Karen Ireland	Pauline Prentice
Vibrant Health Petone	United Video
Expressions Art and Entertainment Centre	

## Supporters of Thumb Up

### Grants and donations 2014

Naureen Colgate  
Carol Hampton  
Hutt City Council—Creative Communities and Petone Community Board  
Inner Wheel Lower Hutt  
St Augustine's Parish  
Molly Vance  
Upper Hutt Community Grant

### Ongoing service support

Jo Young Petone Physiotherapy  
DLA Phillips Fox  
Spacewise  
Vertia Print  
Gillespie Young Watson  
Avenue Service Station  
PC Patch  
Fine Signs

### Thank you for grants and donations received this term

We very much appreciate the donation of \$1000 from **Naureen Colgate** and \$300 from **Carol Hampton** this term. Naureen is a grandmother and Carol an aunt of one of our Thumbs Up participants. The money will be used towards some additional music sessions and special activities.

This term we are also very grateful to receive a grant of \$1000 from **Upper Hutt Community Fund** towards the cost of running one of our vehicles. Thumbs Up has an important connection to Upper Hutt City. Several of our participants and their families live in Upper Hutt, we regularly go to Upper Hutt to use its services, and we have developed many positive relationships with individuals and organisations in Upper Hutt.



All aboard—heading off to Upper Hutt for the day!