

# AGENCYNEWS

Te Mahi Tangata



Work Party Supervisors, from left to right, Bob Ramsay, Temana Lealiifano and Lance Te Patu, take charge of the clean-up.

## Storm-battered town gets help

When a rogue storm hit the Wellington coastal town of Paekakariki in October, it brought a flash flood that left a trail of mud, debris and devastated townspeople in its wake.

But help was on the horizon in the form of the Porirua CPS team, who sent a total of five Community Work parties to help clean up the town – declared a civil disaster zone – over two days.

“It was basically a big mess,” says Porirua Service Manager Ros Lousley. “There was mud everywhere, and a lot of homes were in a truly terrible state.

“We do a lot of work in the community on various ongoing projects, but the cleanup at Paekakariki was an immediate need so we stopped the other projects to help out.”

The work parties, made up of around 80 offenders and led by Work Party Supervisor Aporo Joyce, rolled up their sleeves and got stuck in.

Ros says the attitude of the workers was fantastic. “They could see the big difference they were making, and that counted a lot towards feeling really good about the job they were doing.”

One of the people they helped was Jenny Lee, Manager of Belvedere Motels.

“The work parties helped clean up the rock and mud that had come down in between the buildings. We couldn’t get at it with a digger so they shovelled and carried it out.

“They were really helpful, they worked hard and did a good job, we were very appreciative,” says Jenny.

Don McGuire from the Kapiti Coast District Council’s Civil Defence team says the work parties took on some of the most awkward and unpleasant work.

“They did a lot of work in the badly flooded low-lying area, digging out mud from under trees and houses. The community workers were a very effective group and we were grateful for their support. We’d have them back in a flash!”



Porirua community workers cleaning up mud and rock at the Belvedere Motel.

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## from the General Manager

Welcome to the final issue of *Agency News* for 2003, another busy and challenging year for the Community Probation Service.

As always, our focus at the Community Probation Service remains on working to reduce re-offending, but this year has seen an increased strategic focus on protecting the public, the other side to achieving the Department of Corrections' overarching goal of helping create safer communities.

To achieve this, we need to continue to coordinate our efforts with others who share the same ideals and aims. The programmes, projects and individuals you have seen profiled in *Agency News* through the year are evidence of our commitment to developing and maintaining positive and strong working relationships with local community groups.

As Judge Philip Cooper says in an article in this issue, community agencies and sponsors who provide work opportunities for offenders serving community work sentences are often the 'unsung heroes' of community work and the positive effect it can have on offenders. The article "Beneath the surface" in this issue is just one example of this.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the teams of people in the local community who are working with our staff to help bring about positive change in the lives of offenders.

I wish you and your families a safe and happy holiday season.



**Katrina Casey**  
General Manager  
Probation and Offender Services  
Department of Corrections

## Get-together for sponsors and judge

Service Manager Alex Holmes and his team at the Taupo Community Probation Service see working closely with both the local community and the local judiciary as key to bringing about successful community work outcomes.

"We work hard to form good relationships with our judges and we like to keep them involved and informed about what's going on in the region. Our work is so closely interlinked that it makes sense to keep judges informed and up-to-date about what's going on – especially in practical terms."

Local Area Executive Judge, Judge Phillip Cooper, is keenly interested in finding out more about what's happening with the offenders he sends off to the Community Probation Service, and approached Alex about finding out more about community work in the Taupo/Turangi districts.

"I'm aware that nine times out of ten when a judge sentences an offender that will be the last he or she will see of the case," says Judge Cooper. "The Judge will have no idea of the outcome or what's happened to the offender."

"On the other hand, [Community Probation staff] are able to see what happens and, if they are the right person for that role, can have influence. They have the opportunity to say the right thing at the right time and be a catalyst for real change."

Judge Cooper says that he was particularly keen to meet the local community agency sponsors. "They are often 'unsung heroes', and I was keen to express the local judges' appreciation for all they do in the local community."

Alex took the opportunity to set up an occasion for local Community Work agency sponsors to meet with and chat to Judge Cooper, while at the same time providing a valuable and rare forum for agency sponsors to meet face-to-face with Community Probation staff and each other.

He and his team arranged for a lunchtime get-together, which saw around twenty agency sponsor representatives, probation staff and Judge Cooper attending the lunch.

Alex says they enjoyed the chance to mingle.

"They don't often get to see who else is involved in community work, so from that aspect it was very useful for them."

"It was a very positive day. We were able to bring together all the key groups of community work, plus it meant Judge Cooper could see how the work of the Community Probation Service is received and supported by the community."

# Keeping Napier beautiful

From pre-school to high school, Plunket to Age Concern and everything in between, offenders completing community work sentences are helping to keep Napier beautiful.

In October this year, local MPs and community groups gathered at the Community Probation Service's Napier office to recognise the excellent work being done in Napier by offenders serving community-based sentences.

Painting out graffiti and removing invasive plants that were threatening natives, preparing food parcels for the local foodbank, painting amenities at local marae and maintaining equipment and grounds at schools around the region, are just some of the jobs completed most recently by local community work parties.

Community work offenders were also instrumental in preparing the Hawkes Bay Showgrounds for the recent New Zealand Horse Show of the Year competition, featured in the June issue of *Agency News*. Offenders helped set up the 22 separate arenas required for the event, prepared and painted the show jumping poles, and even helped organise the visitors on the weekend itself. Event Organiser Kevin Hansen says that he'll continue



*Napier Probation Officer Graham Booth with some toys made by one Community Work offender for under-privileged children.*

to use the Community Work Centre. "They're first on my list for the next show - no question."

To determine where offenders are placed, the Community Work Centre uses an innovative but effective system that has offenders applying for some of the roles on offer, and going through an interview process.

"If we can, we like to give them as much experience with the 'real world' of working as possible," says Graham Booth, Napier Community Probation Officer. "So when any good jobs come up, we put them through their paces.

Written application, full-on interview, the whole bit. We find it helps them gain confidence and gives them a good start if they've been having trouble getting a job."

Community-based sentences are of benefit to us all, explains Mr Booth.

"Agencies benefit through free labour, offenders through the development of an improved work ethic, victims through offenders making compensation to the community in which they committed their crime, and lastly taxpayers through an alternative to imprisonment."

# Goodbye graffiti – hello Whakatane!



*Graffiti busters at work.  
Photo: courtesy of  
The Whakatane Beacon*

Graffiti in Whakatane has hit an all-time low, thanks to the hard work of Work Party Supervisor Louiese Mules and members of her community work party last month.

Once a week for most of this year the work party has hit the streets of Whakatane, scrubbing down and painting over graffiti that has appeared around the town during the previous week.

Incidents and reports of graffiti have reduced considerably, with the skateboard park being the most notable triumph.

"I took to (the project) with a passion," says Louiese. The park's freshly painted blue-grey walls were barely dry when graffiti started to reappear. Undeterred, the team returned and painted over it.

Louiese warned skaters that the next time she returned it would be with pink paint and it was no idle threat. "The tagging continued, so we turned up with the pink paint and it soon stopped after the first coat was applied."

This consistent and persistent approach of removing graffiti almost as soon as it appears has not gone unnoticed by the townspeople of Whakatane.

Recently the graffiti-busting team recently downed brushes for a few hours to receive official thanks and a certificate of appreciation from Pride Whakatane committee members for their work, in a ceremony held at council chambers.

Whakatane Community Sergeant Neil Peterson works closely with the Whakatane Community Work Centre,

both in his capacity as a police sergeant and as a member of the 'Pride Whakatane Committee'.

He says he has been impressed with the hard work of both the staff and the offenders on Community Work.

In a recent letter to the Whakatane Beacon (see September 2003 issue of Agency News), Neil said that the Pride Whakatane Committee wanted to honour Louise, the other supervisors John, Henare and Lance, their service manager Peri Mason and their teams of workers, "...for their hard work in keeping our town graffiti free and their other beautification work".

The anti-graffiti programme is a joint initiative with Police and the District Council, but is driven by Louiese.

Her commitment and persuasive manner guaranteed a year's supply of paint, chemicals and brushes from the council.

Louiese was delighted with the community acknowledgement, but it was the sense of pride and feeling of achievement for her work party team that was the real reward for the 13-year veteran of Corrections.

"It's pretty special, it's really lifted them, they feel good about the recognition," she says.

When not removing graffiti, Whakatane's Community Work offenders can be found building walking tracks, gardening and doing maintenance work at schools and marae.

# Building links with Pacific community

Members of the Wellington Pacific community met in October with Corrections management and staff to discuss greater community involvement in the Department's work.

Dave East, Wellington Prisons Regional Manager, said the Pacific Day was held to communicate the goals of The Pacific Strategy, and to explain how the Pacific community can contribute to achieving those goals.

Strategy goals include formalising working relationships with the Pacific community, increasing the capability and responsiveness of the Department to the needs of Pacific inmates, and reducing re-offending by Pacific offenders.

"Genuine enthusiasm was shown by Pacific community representatives and Corrections staff to work together to address the needs of Pacific inmates," said Mr East.

"Inmates need to establish positive links with the community to help their transition back into that community when they finish their sentences. The Department's Pacific Strategy includes initiatives to encourage that support."

The meeting was also an opportunity to discuss progress made on strategy initiatives. For example, the recent establishment of the Chief Executive's Pacific Advisory Group, the launch of the Saili Matagi violence prevention programme, and the introduction of Fautua Pasefika roles – which allows Pacific community leaders greater and easier access to prisons and Pacific inmates.

The day-long event was coordinated by the Wellington Regional Prisons Pacific Staff Network, which declared the get-together an all-round success.



Members of the Wellington Regional Prisons Pacific Staff Network. From left: Numa Kiriau, Straight Thinking Facilitator; Terry Tearikiau, IOMS Business Coach; Kathleen Masoe, CIE Site Operations Manager; Miriam Letoa, Youth Unit Manager; Leota Viko Aufaga, Sentence Planner; and Chaplain Pona Solomona.



## *Heartland project opens in Coromandel*

The Community Probation Service has been involved in bringing the Heartland Project to Coromandel, and in September Labour MP Nanaia Mahuta opened the region's new Heartland Centre.

The Heartland Project is an inter-agency arrangement of the Ministry of Social Development that aims to give people living in remote areas face-to-face contact with government services.

There are approximately 20-30 CPS offenders in the vicinity of Coromandel township and many were travelling long distances to report at the Thames office, which was impractical for many offenders, for example, those disqualified from driving.

Probation Officer Steve Taylor was looking at ways to overcome the problem when he heard about the Heartland Project. Now, Work and Income, Corrections and possibly other Government agencies will share facilities in the Coromandel township for the specific hours or days they require to conduct their business.

"These facilities will make it so much more practical for offenders in remote areas to comply with their sentence conditions," says Steve.

The facilities will be located in premises owned by Coromandel Independent Living Trust. The Trust provides work opportunities to offenders on community-based sentences. Offenders can complete their Community Work hours by assisting the Trust's special needs clients to live independently in the community.

# Beneath the surface – one man's Community Work success story

On the face of it, a history of gang affiliations, facial tattoos and nearly 70 convictions since the age of 18 meant it would have been easy to fob one Napier-based man off as just another 'hopeless case'.

But when Wallace was sentenced to 250 hours of Community Work for non-payment of fines. In October last year, the Napier Community Work Centre saw something else in his history of offending.

"When someone is sentenced to Community Work, we assess them to see if they are more suitable as an agency placement or a work centre placement," says Napier Probation Officer Graham Booth. "It was obvious from looking at Wallace's record that his history of imprisonment, periodic

***The team gave more consideration to his high response to community-based sanctions, and he was assessed as suitable for an Agency. Tattooed face and all.***

detention [a former sentence similar to work centre-based community work], supervision, parole and fines had not curtailed his offending to any great degree."

Graham says that if they had looked no further than that, Wallace would be considered as a high risk offender and suitable for work centre-based community work only.

"But then we noticed a trend in Wallace's history over his six years' worth of periodic detention," Graham continues. "He always complied with

all the requirements of those periodic detention sentences, which pointed to the fact that he responded well to this kind of sentence."

So rather than base the assessment outcome purely on Wallace's previous offending, the Napier Community Work team gave more consideration to his high response to community-based sanctions, and he was assessed as suitable for an Agency. Tattooed face and all.

## From strength to strength

Wallace was placed at a local school and completed his 250 hours early May 2003, which involved maintaining the grounds and doing general chores every weekend. Even better news came when the impressed headmaster offered Wallace paid part-time employment to "continue with the superb work he is doing".

Graham says Wallace is very positive about his part-time employment and has been accepted by the school community, including the parents.

"He's going from strength to strength. He has recently received his first pay-rise, and along with this the school board is sponsoring his attendance at NZQA course on swimming pool care, so he will assume the responsibilities of ensuring the swimming pool meets OSH and health department standards."

As Wallace himself says of the new course, "I have to read a lot of manuals

***"This time the police pick me up from home but not to arrest me."***

but I'm enjoying it." He's also enjoying other areas of his life more now. He is involved in weekly meetings with a group of young offenders through the police youth aid section, where he talks about problems associated with being tattooed and getting employment, his previous gang involvement and finally how offending has affected his life in the long term. As he says, "This time the police pick me up from home but not to arrest me."

## Trust is the key

It is just over 13 months since Wallace last appeared in court, which is the longest period in his 26-year history of offending. When you ask Wallace what brought about the change, his response is simple: trust.

"For the first time the system showed me some trust – the Community Work people showed me trust, the headmaster and school showed me trust, the kids showed me trust, and the police showed me trust. So I have to show trust back.

"I didn't think there was anyone who would be willing to trust me, and it helped me to find myself. Giving me trust has made me take a positive step and attitude towards my future."

***"Giving me trust has made me take a positive step and attitude towards my future".***

Since this article was written, Wallace received notice that he'll be employed 40 hours a week at the school from 2004, with Workbridge paying his wages for the next two years.

# Helping others see a way forward

When it comes to talking to others about overcoming life's challenges, Mount Eden Probation Officer Sachida Reddy and Manawatu Criminogenic Programme Facilitator Russell Lowry know what they're talking about.

Both Sachida and Russell are blind, and every day they show their community, fellow colleagues and offenders just what it means to 'walk the talk'.

Aided by the latest technology, both have dealt with the practical difficulties around the workplace – not surprising as neither have the word 'compromise' in their vocabulary. As Sachida says, "A high standard of work is expected and has to be delivered".

Both joined the Department under the government's Mainstream employment initiative for people with disabilities. Russell went to Manawatu Prison as an assessor/scheduler of sentenced inmates in 2001. He later applied to become a Criminogenic Programme Facilitator, taking up the role in June 2002. Sachida became a Probation Officer in 1990, gained a post-graduate diploma in social work and social policy in 1997, and is now based at the Community Probation Service's Mt Eden Service Centre.

They agree that the 'risks' of employing a disabled person can be managed in advance given a good employer and the right equipment. For them that means having voice-synthesised computers networked to the Department's IT system.

Sachida began at Corrections (then the Department of Justice) he had just a basic note-taking computer and



*Russell Lowry talks to an inmate about his offending.  
Photo: Courtesy of The Manawatu Evening Standard*

needed volunteers to record documents onto tape for him. Over the years the equipment has become more sophisticated and with the latest 'talking computer' software he can work more or less independently.

"Clients find it difficult to believe I can't see, and ask if I am fully blind. Some try to be intimidating – they would try to intimidate anybody – and others are often angry. But a guide dog under the desk can be a calming influence."

Russell, registered blind since he was 15, says other people's preconceived attitudes towards the disabled can be more difficult to overcome.

"Management did a wonderful job in preparing staff for my specific needs prior to my arrival. Without such thoughtful people willing to accept and learn about my particular needs it wouldn't have been possible to have journeyed so far," he says.

"Being a Criminogenic Programme Facilitator really suits my passion and skill base, as I wanted to work in a more therapeutic role in the rehabilitation of offenders."

Sachida adds: "There is a mystique about blindness. People like Russell and I can, with the help of good employers and the right equipment, demystify it and show we can do a good job."



*Sachida Reddy and Fisher are based at the Community Probation Service's Mt Eden Service Centre.*



Glenys Bremner (left) and Penny Eames, Executive Director of Arts Access Aotearoa, with a screen print from the Auckland Prison Inmate Art Group.

## Using art to link to community

Auckland Probation Officer Glenys Bremner sees art as more than just pleasing to the eye - it can also be an effective communication tool.

Glenys, who has recently completed a six-month placement with Arts Access Aotearoa, says, "The arts encourage inmates, many of whom have limited literacy, to communicate in a rewarding way. This in turn helps foster a positive attitude towards the education process and skills for employment."

Glenys used her six months to focus on an advocacy campaign for arts in the justice sector. As part of her placement, she visited over 60 community organisations, almost all the prisons in New Zealand and a large number of the Community Probation Service Centres across the country.

One of her most exciting projects was fostering further arts initiatives at Waikeria Prison, which has recently confirmed an artist-in-residence position, similar to an existing arrangement at Auckland Prison.

Glenys knows of one inmate who was accepted straight into the second year of a carving diploma on release due to the work he had undertaken in prison. Another inmate who started painting in prison is now a trustee of a gallery / creative space in Auckland.

"Participation can be another tool to help offenders rejoin the community and live crime-free lives," she says.

"The projects also give offenders an opportunity to forge links with the many groups in the community working creatively. These links can provide valuable support for an offender once

their sentence, be it custodial or community-based, finishes."

For further information on Arts Access Aotearoa: PO Box 9828, Wellington, phone 04-916 4885, fax 04 473 2905, e-mail [info@artsaccess.org.nz](mailto:info@artsaccess.org.nz) or visit <http://www.artsaccess.org.nz>.



We appreciate your comments and suggestions. If your organisation would like to feature in the next issue or you know of someone who would like to receive a quarterly copy of **AGENCYNEWS** please contact:  
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