

Takapuna Repair Café

August 2016

Stephen McLuckie and Dale Kelly

A Repair Café is a pop up event where people bring their broken and damaged belongings and local experts will sit down with them and do their best to repair them. It's all about bringing people together, connecting local people in their communities with others who are happy to share their skills and knowledge, saving people money and reducing the amount of material that ends up in our landfills. There's an international movement of repair cafes which began in the Netherlands in 2009. The North Shore had its first Repair Café, the second in New Zealand, at Bayswater School in July.

This was made possible through an innovative, developing piece of work called *Shore to Thrive*, a partnership project between the Takapuna Methodist Church and Auckland North Community and Development. It's all about developing strengths based and community led approaches to improving the wellbeing of local children and families on Auckland's North Shore. Inspired by *Let the Children Live*, at its heart it asks the question of how can caring and connected communities come together and have a positive influence on some of the complex issues effecting the lives of local people.

Through local community conversations connected to *Shore to Thrive* there emerged this wonderful opportunity related to the spirit of the work. A partnership developed with the Devonport Community Recycling Centre, who committed to sending staff, expertise and equipment. A free venue was secured at Bayswater School thanks to enthusiastic principal, Lindsay Child.

Stephen McLuckie, *Shore to Thrive* Coordinator, spent time inspiring and recruiting skilled local volunteers. Quickly joining the team was Bruno, a retired electrician, then there was Megan, a keen seamstress and Bayswater School mum, there was Jamie, the owner of a local woodworking business, Dale Kelly from the TMC volunteered and organized the involvement of others from the congregation. Monique through her experience at Playcentre was keen to run a space so that children could get involved. It really seemed to tap into something and many more followed. As well as being generous with their time and expertise all volunteers committed to bringing along their own tools to support the event.

Once a core group had become involved and it became clearer what kind of repairs were going to be possible, planning and promotion began in earnest. Word of the event was spread through local press, social media, via word of mouth and a flyer drop to local homes. This resulted in more enthusiastic volunteers as well as people asking whether their item might be fixed. Local retailers committed to supplying the event with materials such as nails, screws, spools of thread, zips, etc.

It seemed to have a wide ranging appeal for a diverse group of people, both those for whom the environment and sustainability are important but also those who are motivated by

thriftiness and reducing waste. By the time the event happened there were so many offering to volunteer that people had to go on a waiting list.

After such success in recruiting people to help there was then a nervous wait to see if people would actually turn up on the day with items to be repaired. The event was a great success and it was wonderful to have so many of the Takapuna Methodist Church congregation involved in it. It was all made possible by the amazing skills and generosity of local people and the fact that they were so willing to share their talents and expertise to help those around them. There was a team of clothes repairers, electrical appliance repairers, someone to fix furniture and wooden items, bike mechanics, general repairers and even someone who was prepared to offer advice on car and motorcycle maintenance.

29 out of the 50 items brought along were repaired. Most pleasing was not the repairing of things but the fantastic positive atmosphere, the fact sharing and reciprocity, giving and receiving were entered into so warmly and enthusiastically. People were sharing and learning new skills. Even some of the repairers commented on learning new tips and tricks. The event ran from 10am to 1pm on a Saturday. In addition to the 25 people who were volunteering, around 90 people came through the doors either to have something fixed or just to look around. School Principal, Lindsay commented, "It was great to see so many whānau at the Repair Café. There was a real buzz when I popped in to see how it was all going. It was a real pleasure to see the school's facilities being used for something which fits so well with culture of the school: Community coming together to help each other". There has been a huge amount of interest in having further Repair Cafes both locally and across Auckland. This could just be the beginning of a movement.