



Thrive

Your impact on the future of
New Zealand whānau | Autumn 2025



whānau āwhina
plunket

Kia ora,

I hope this issue of *Thrive* finds you well, perhaps getting ready to celebrate the special māmā figures in your life over the coming weekend.

Mother's Day is such an amazing time to recognise the strong wāhine who influence us. I am particularly in awe – every day – of the nurses, community kaimahi and volunteers who give so much love and attention to families during their hours at Plunket, but are also inspiring mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, mother figures and leaders in their own communities. A special mention here to Alana, our playgroup superstar who was a friendly face in our latest appeal; Alana recently welcomed another son to her family, Harvey. Congratulations, Alana! Enjoy those newborn-snuggles and the start of life as a mother of two. More on Alana, Harvey and results of the tax appeal further on.

You'll also read about another inspirational Plunket figure, Jane Denley, in Canterbury. The Plunket community was saddened by Jane's passing in March. She left behind a long, beautiful legacy of profound empathy and humanity, having helped countless families during her decades with Plunket and through the other amazing ways she gave back to the Timaru community. We have been truly fortunate to have had someone of her calibre with us and have valued Jane's leadership, friendship, effort and commitment to improving outcomes for whānau.

We also touch on the generosity of Oceanbridge, who supported Plunket with a successful golf fundraiser; our Star Partner's incredible efforts in their BestStart Butterfly Appeal; and have lots of exciting news from across the organisation and the motu, including an update on how our new Dunedin hub is faring.

Thank you, as always, to everyone reading this newsletter. Your support of Plunket means that we can continue being there for tamariki, their mothers, and their wider whānau this year.

Ngā mihi nui,

Fiona Kingsford, Chief Executive.

P.S: On a personal note, I'm especially excited this Mother's Day as it'll be my first as a grandmother! My special mokopuna, Monty, was born in March and I have been soaking up all of the lovely cuddles.



Your generosity during the tax season means that playgroups can keep going strong in 2025.

Thank you for your incredible generosity during our recent tax appeal.

In the February and March campaign, we told you all about the power of playgroups. Community services like these are lifelines for many whānau who need to connect with other caregivers just as much as their tamariki need to learn through play.

Your support meant that we raised over \$80k. This means that Community Services Coordinators like Alana, who you may remember from our letter or online, can run educational, enriching groups while also providing adults with the opportunity to build friendships, or be referred to relevant Plunket kaimahi to help them with other needs and wrap them in care and support.

You might remember that Alana had help from her son, Bryan, to make playgroup super fun and entertaining. Well in February, Alana and her family welcomed a second baby – wee Harvey! “Harvey has had his first Plunket appointment, which was awesome,” gushes Alana. “The nurse was lovely and thorough. It was helpful that she came to us because it is difficult to get out the door on time for a set appointment around feeds, naps and nappy changes!” But she’s definitely keen to get back to playgroup as soon as possible. “Harvey will come to Papatoetoe and Manukau playgroups with me!”

So if you happen to attend either of those playgroups, keep your eyes peeled in the coming months for a very cute new face. And from Alana, Harvey, Bryan, and everyone here at Plunket – thank you so much for your support.



Alana with baby Harvey

The Kotahitaka hub in Dunedin is fast becoming a safe vibrant space for whānau

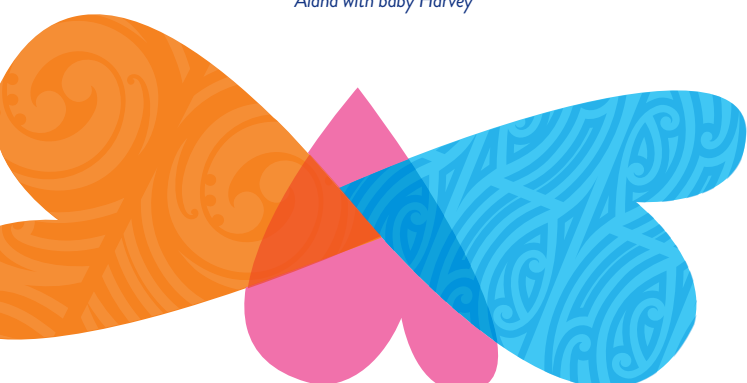
We were recently thrilled to announce the opening of a vibrant new hub in Ōtepoti, Dunedin, where Plunket began over a century ago.

With the doors having opened on November 7, we’ve now had nearly six months of bouncing babies, toddling tamariki and precious little people filling the space with their caregivers for core checks, playgroups and everything in between at Kotahitaka. The name means unity of togetherness – symbolising the support this centre is able to provide children and their whānau. It’s really allowing us to cater to the region’s needs.

There are Car Seat Clinics for help with proper installation; Giggles Playgroup every Monday in the Jean Nelson Room, which was named after a generous donor who left a gift in her Will, Counting Cubs numeracy playgroup, a Tongan Community playgroup and a Rainbow Families Playgroup on weekends, to name just a few. There are also other likeminded organisations who use the space to help whānau too, like ACC who are running a Trauma Sensitive course, and Shama Supporting Ethnic Women – Let’s Talk Kids Workshop, which helps parents learn how to talk with their tamariki about keeping safe from sexual harm. And the community garden beds near the hub’s carpark are well on their way to supplying veggies to families who need them, thanks to two green-thumb volunteers!

“Our vision was always that Kotahitaka would be a community hub rather than just for Plunket and that is certainly coming to fruition,” says Catherine Caley, Community Services Manager for Otago and Southland region. “The groups using the space are varied across many sectors of the wider community and filling needs including social connection and child and adult education. We are looking forward to working with our community to develop the hub in ways that work for them.”

This hub has enabled us to provide support for Dunedin’s families in lots of different and new ways, taking current issues in society into consideration. And ultimately, the hub means that people are gathering under one roof for the health and wellbeing of their tamariki, but also to seek the support they so need as caregivers of young children. Donating during our recent appeal, which was all about the power of playgroups, has certainly helped us continue this important mahi. Thank you again.





The BestStart Butterfly Appeal reaches an incredible milestone!

Our Star Partner, BestStart, has been working with us to help tamariki and their whānau thrive since 2014. As a huge show of their support, they run an annual appeal across their 260 centres during the month of March, raising valuable funds to keep Plunket's services going strong. The little ones at the centres get to do all sorts of fun activities, like making butterfly art, 'sliming' their teachers and yummy bake sales just to name a few!



Plunket nurse, Paula Gonzalez, visited BestStart Gillies Ave during the Butterfly Appeal to lead a music and movement mat time with the tamariki.

This year marked a big milestone – the appeal's 10th anniversary! And to honour the occasion, BestStart renamed the appeal the BestStart Butterfly Appeal, inspired by Plunket's iconic butterfly. The butterfly perfectly reflects the growth, care, and transformation that Plunket brings to tamariki and their whānau every day, and that BestStart also achieves through their early childhood educational programmes. One particular week during March is prime time for all the fun, traditionally the 'appeal week' but this year saw the newly-named Butterfly Appeal, spanning the whole month!

Better still, the BestStart Butterfly Appeal raised the most it ever has before! Around \$70k and counting, a massive help to keep our frontline kaimahi in our communities seeing our families where and when they need us. Ka pai, BestStart!

Tee-rific support from Oceanbridge!

We are hugely grateful to Oceanbridge Shipping owners, Bill and Lindsay Speedy. They have supported Whānau Āwhina Plunket since their children were young and have seen the positive impact of Plunket for their whānau and Oceanbridge staff. Bill and Lindsay were recently inspired to support Plunket further - through their annual Charity Golf Day in February.

Over 100 participants turned up to Oceanbridge's Golf Day at the Akarana Golf Club in Auckland. Our Philanthropy Manager, Loren O'Sullivan attended to thank Bill and Lindsay and lend a helping hand. With such a great turnout, all the golf carts were taken - leaving Loren and Lindsay to navigate the golf course on an old bumpy tractor! The golfers certainly didn't mind the noisy old tractor as it delivered cold drinks and snacks, lifting their spirits on such a hot summer's day in Tāmaki Makaurau.

After a great round of golf for a good cause, Oceanbridge hosted a dinner and prizegiving ceremony. The golfers generously dug into their pockets, participating in the raffle, and Loren spoke about Plunket's positive impact in the community.

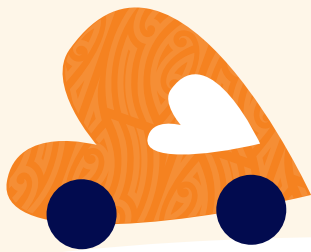
Oceanbridge's generous donation will support two important renovation projects – our Plunket hubs in Māngere Bridge and Mairangi Bay. A part of the Māngere Bridge renovation includes a new fence. This seems fitting given that Plunket's early intervention and prevention focus helps to build a fence at the top of the cliff for tamariki and their whānau in Aotearoa. Thank you to the Speedy family and Oceanbridge team for your incredible ongoing support!

If you would like to organise a similar fundraising event at a time of year that suits you best, please contact Jo Bailey, our Community Fundraising & Events Specialist for support: jo.bailey@plunket.org.nz



Loren O'Sullivan, Philanthropy Manager (centre) with the Speedys





Fast feet in fundraising!

We're super grateful to the runners and walkers who took part in the recent Round the Bays Wellington and Auckland events and fundraised for Plunket at the same time!

At the Auckland race, Chief Executive Fiona Kingsford and members of the Fundraising team laced up their sneakers and walked and talked all the way to the finish, fundraising and having fun every step of the way.

Amongst the speedy Wellington athletes was Wiremu Adds, who didn't let the windy city slow him down from completing an impressive half-marathon and raising \$700 to support Plunket.

"Over the summer, my whānau had to call PlunketLine for our 10-month-old daughter – Amaia," says Wiri. "The nurse on the line was incredible. She gave us all the key things to look out for and the reassurance we needed. In what was a pretty stressful moment for me and my wife, the nurse helped put us at ease and gave us the confidence to make the right call as parents. Thankfully, baby ended up recovering 100%, but that experience stuck with me. Plunket does so much for whānau across the country, often in those small but huge parenting moments, so I thought I'd run this one for them."

We are so grateful to Wiri and are pleased that our PlunketLine kaimahi were able to be there for his whānau in a moment of urgent need.

If you love fundraising events like this and are looking to add the next exciting cause to the calendar, make it *Dunk it for Plunket 2025*! This is our biggest (and yummiest) fundraiser of the year. Held in September, you can sign up online and either opt for a 'Dunk Kit' of delicious goodies for a morning or afternoon tea fundraising event, or dunk anything – or anyone – you like! Visit www.dunkitforplunket.nz and register today! Top tip: if you fundraised last year, you can even ask to be added to the VIP Dunker list! This is the only way to be guaranteed a Dunk Kit...



Wiri at Round the Bays Auckland

A South Canterbury Community Services superstar passes away, leaving an incredible Plunket legacy

The Plunket community recently lost a highly respected, much-loved member of our whānau, Jane Denley. Jane passed away after a brief battle with cancer on March 9.

Jane was involved for more than two decades with Plunket, starting as a volunteer in her earlier days and progressing to become the Community Services Manager of Mid-South Canterbury for 23 years. Melanie Laban, Plunket's National Community Services Manager, says that Jane was an absolute trailblazer. She set up the Giving People Support programme, an in-home support service where volunteers provide help and companionship to caregivers.

"She was a huge advocate for community services and for whānau with limited access to what they need," says Mel. "Giving People Support is just one great example of Jane seeing a need and not only is that a huge success, but it has been adopted across the country and slightly tweaked for each region."

There is a treasure trove of good-news stories connected with the programme, and the difference it has made to many whānau."



Jane (back left) with Louise (front left), and Plunket colleagues and friends, Janine (front right) and Juliana (back right) celebrating Christmas with the team in 2024.

Jane was very active within the wider Timaru community; she was a member of the Children's Day committee, volunteered at Budget Advice, worked at the Salvation Army as a budget adviser and had very recently joined the Aoraki Food Rescue Board. Just days before she died, Plunket kaimahi were honoured to have presented Jane with a Timaru District Council Community Award, a beautiful demonstration of the region's appreciation for her steadfast support and involvement.

South Canterbury Plunket Community Services Coordinator, Louise Haley, reflects on the very special person that Jane was. "She remembered everything – people, birthdays, work anniversaries, and always asked what was happening in their worlds. She was a truly beautiful friend who we all dearly miss, but we will endeavour to honour her and her legacy."

The South Canterbury team will now have a yearly Jane Denley Spirit of Volunteering Award each May, which was Jane's birthday month.

A memorial took place in early May to celebrate Jane's life.

[Read more](#)

Other Plunket news from across the motu

In March, we continued to roll out our immunisation programme. We can now offer vaccinations by Plunket nurses at clinics in Kirikiriroa – Hamilton, Taurarunui (Central North Island), Whangārei and Kaikohe (Far North).

The ‘Super Saturday’ clinic held in March at the Kirikiriroa clinic saw hundreds of tamariki and their whānau come through for Well Child Checks, dental checks and these important immunisations, as well as lots of fun and games – and some free hats for the wee ones!

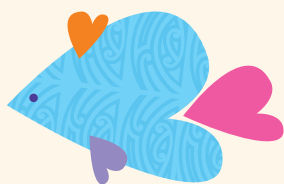
Clinical Services Manager, Carena Nagle says her team deserves a huge shout out. “It was great to see so many happy families,” she says. “The team had a great day and are already looking forward to the next one in a couple of months. I’m so proud of the team and loved seeing them enjoy their mahi today with something a bit different!”

This is huge progress in our shared mission with Health New Zealand to increase the number of tamariki being fully vaccinated by the age of two.

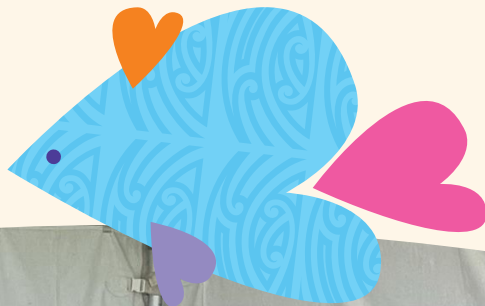
In February, we were honoured to be present at the olympics of kapa haka, Te Matatini in Ngāmotu/ New Plymouth. Amidst the buzz of the crowds and powerhouse performances from 55 of Aotearoa New Zealand’s top kapa haka teams, we offered a calm, relaxed space for hundreds of whānau, including a quiet space for māmā to breastfeed, activities for tamariki, a well-stocked change area thanks to our partner, Huggies, and of course support for any child-related concerns or questions from our knowledgeable kaimahi.

“I think people really appreciated that we provided a sanctuary,” Linda Antonia, Community Services Co-ordinator says. “We had grandparents and aunts, as well as parents pop in for a visit – it was cool to see that – it takes a village to raise a child!”

With an estimated 2.5 million viewers online and an audience of around 70,000, Te Matatini is a major event in the Māori cultural calendar. It has grown in size and popularity since it began in 1972. “Te Matatini aims to contribute positively to the overall health and social wellbeing of whānau,” says Pou Whakarae – Chief Advisor, Hera Black. “This aligns strongly with our own vision for Whānau Āwhina Plunket.”



Front: CE Fiona Kindsford and Pou Whakare - Chief Advisor Hera Black.
Back: Kaihapai Māori - Senior Advisor Māori Tania Taylor, Plunket Kaiāwhina Te Aroha Pauli, Clinical Leader Sharlene Sampson, Plunket Kaiāwhina Samantha Haverfield and Plunket nurse Linda Frost.



Tamariki Tidbits: fun facts you may not know about little ones!

In honour of Mother's Day this month, did you know that a baby's cells can enter the mother's body through the placenta during pregnancy and remain there for decades? The mother's cells can also make their way into the baby's tissue and may impact the development of the brain and immune system of their pēpi (baby).

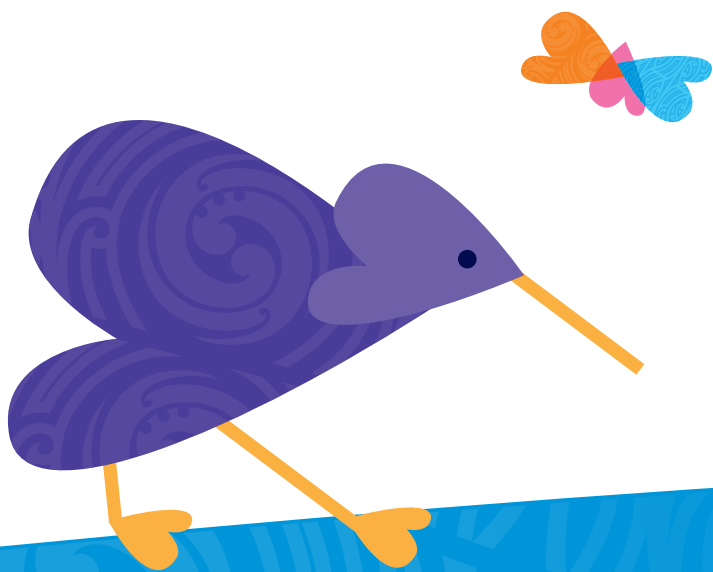
So maybe a 'mother's intuition' actually has some biological truth to it!



Words from whānau that you help by supporting Plunket:

In each issue, we'd love to start sharing short snippets of stories from our families who, thanks to donors like you, are able to be supported by Plunket teams across Aotearoa.

"Plunket is just the best! We had just moved to our own bit of land and into a tiny house (yes, with a newborn) and when it came time for Plunket to visit, our nurse (what a woman!) hopped along our makeshift wooden block path and climbed the little ladder to get into the house, which she did so graciously. We now have a path and beautiful deck and a growing baby boy, and our nurse has been so supportive that I love showing her around what has been added to or done since she was last there. Plunket is seriously a godsend- we are so grateful for all the support and advice we get."



If you would like more detail about these news stories, please contact the Fundraising team supporters@plunket.org.nz or call 0800 20 55 55



whānau āwhina
plunket