

Volunteer News

Quarterly pānui – December 2024

whānau āwhina
plunket



Kia ora koutou

December is a special month as we celebrated International Volunteer Day on the 5th.

I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge you and your contribution to Whānau Āwhina Plunket. So much of what we do is only possible through your hard mahi and ongoing dedication to our vision. Thank you for the time and energy you put into ensuring we can support pēpi, tamariki and whānau to thrive.

It's been a busy but exciting time here at Plunket. In October, we announced the launch of our immunisation pilot and in November, opened a brand-new Dunedin community hub that will future proof us for generations to come. Keep reading for more on these special events.

In this issue, we hear from an Auckland māmā whose life was transformed when she found the courage to begin attending one of our playgroups. We also share a fun and simple playdough recipe to get you in the festive spirit.

Meri Kirihimete and have a wonderful holiday season – we are looking forward to continuing our work with you in the year ahead.

Ngā mihi nui,
Fiona Kingsford



Annual Report out now!

Our [Annual Report 2023/2024](#) is now available to read on the Plunket website. Jam-packed with lots of stories and information, it provides a great overview of our mahi.



Sharing our gratitude

Our wonderful volunteers in Te Puke, Whakatāne and Tauranga came together for a morning tea to celebrate International Volunteer Day. It was a great opportunity for connection with lots of smiles and laughter all round.





Plunket playgroup a gateway to support network

It's volunteers like you who make it possible for us to run our playgroups. They are vital for community connection and can be life-changing – especially for first-time mums like Chelsea.

When she found the courage to get herself and wee baby Mikey to Plunket's Onehunga playgroup, Chelsea found a support network she could rely on and her whole world changed for the better.

“For the first time in a long time I didn't feel alone. I didn't have to put on a front. It was okay not to feel okay. Everyone was kind and it was a relief to talk to real people sharing similar experiences.

“I'd been suffering from postnatal depression; we'd moved suburbs, my husband was back at work and I had no friends close by. So, when my Plunket nurse suggested I attend the playgroup it was a big step – but I'm so glad I did.”

Fast forward 18 months, and Chelsea is a regular at the Onehunga Plunket Playgroup. She says it has become her second home, and it's where they celebrated Mikey's first birthday and he tried his first solids.

“Mikey really enjoys himself learning and playing with the other little ones, and I can just be me. Sharing the ups and downs of parenting and having that social network of support has really boosted my mental wellbeing.

“I'm so grateful I found my home away from home at Plunket's playgroup.”

[Click here to watch Chelsea tell her story.](#)

Our one-stop community hub opens in Dunedin

We were proud to open Kotahitaka in November, Ōtepoti Dunedin's new community hub for whānau with tamariki under five.

The new hub provides a handy one-stop centre for families, bringing the services of seven clinics together. Plunket nurses, kaiāwhina and community Karitāne health workers, and community services such as playgroups, antenatal classes, injury prevention and volunteer home visiting services will all be under one roof.

“We are excited to welcome the Dunedin community to Whānau Āwhina Plunket's new centre, Kotahitaka. The name means unity of togetherness – symbolising the support this centre will provide for whānau and their tamariki,” says Mrs Kingsford.

“Ōtepoti Dunedin is a place that means so much to the whakapapa of Whānau Āwhina Plunket. We began in Karitāne more than 117 years ago and now we are future proofing our services for generations of babies to come.”

Karitāne was the home of the first Plunket baby, Thomas Rangiwahia Mutu Ellison (Tommy), in 1906. Respected midwives and healers Mere Harper and Ria Tikini, both of Kāi Tahu and Kāti Huirapa descent, helped deliver and care for Tommy.

Five rooms within Kotahitaka reflect Plunket's strong connections with Dunedin. They are named in honour of the Ellison whānau, who still support Plunket today; Otago University Distinguished Professor the late Richie Poulton CNZM, who was a champion for Plunket's work; Dunedin resident Jean Nelson, a loyal supporter of Plunket for many years, who left a generous donation in her will which has contributed significantly to the new hub; and midwives Mere Harper and Ria Tikini.



CE Fiona Kingsford with David Ellison (holding a photo of his grandfather Tommy).

More from Whānau Āwhina Plunket

Christmas Appeal time!

Our latest major appeal focuses on māmā Kelly and her daughter Quinn.

Quinn was born with half a heart and had her first emergency open-heart surgery at just six weeks old. To make an unbelievably tough situation even worse, shortly after the operation Kelly found out a truck had crashed through their house. The whānau were effectively homeless and had to move to a new suburb.

It was a reassuring visit from her Plunket nurse and a group of amazing local women who 'wrapped around her like a safety blanket', helping her feel connected and human again during such a difficult time.

[Read more](#) about Kelly and Quinn's remarkable story.



Associate Health Minister Casey Costello, Health Minister Dr Shane Reti and Whānau Āwhina Plunket Chief Executive Fiona Kingsford.

Plunket to deliver childhood immunisations

In October, we were excited to announce that alongside Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora, we will be piloting the delivery of childhood immunisations at a select number of sites across the country.

The new pilot programme, funded to run until June 2026, was announced by Health Minister, Dr Shane Reti and Associate Health Minister, Casey Costello during a special event at our Westfield Manukau hub in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland.

[Read more](#)



Q&A with volunteer Rory Foley

Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I'm a construction specialist from South Canterbury and also a horror fan! I created FearNZ which is a charitable company that raises money for organisations, including Plunket so they can keep their community services up and running. From spooky maize mazes to abandoned prison and warehouse set-ups, my team and I scare people as a truly unique way to fundraise.

I'm also more than happy to grab my tools and visit a local Plunket clinic to fix a wobbly table or anything else that may need sorting!

What do you enjoy most about your volunteering?

I absolutely love supporting the community and Plunket has such a wonderful family feel to it. I enjoy seeing people connect and help each other, and I get to make new friends and witness the difference the organisation makes for a family. No two days are the same.

What is next for you?

I'm currently working on a top-secret project (so I can't say much about this yet!) which will raise money for Plunket while giving people of all ages a fun experience. Stay tuned...



Festive fun!



Christmas playdough

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups salt
- 3 tbsp Cream of Tartar
- ½ cup oil
- 6 cups boiling water
- 6 cups flour
- Red or green food colouring



Method

- Add the salt, Cream of Tartar and oil to a large bowl.
- Pour in the boiling water so the ingredients melt together, stirring gently.
- Add the flour (more or less can be used to get the right consistency) and a few drops of food colouring. Add more if desired for a more intense colour.
- Mix all ingredients well. Finish by kneading the dough.

Tip

To create a sensory experience for tamariki, consider mixing in glitter (biodegradable is a great option) or different scents by adding peppermint extract, cinnamon or nutmeg. Cookie cutters are great for experimenting with different shapes.

