

Monte Cecilia Whanau & Friends

Newsletter Meri Kirihimete 2011



It's not just a garden - it is part of a healthy home



"It's very nice to work in the garden. I learn a lot from the garden." says Emma Faatupu



Yvonne Thomas and Mona Nimmo teach residents at Monte Cecilia House to cook a wide range of meals



Residents enjoying the fresh produce for their lunch

When you walk through the garden at Monte Cecilia House in Mangere you can tell that thought has been taken as to what to plant. There are silver and rainbow beet, radishes, puha, taro, potatoes, lettuces, tomatoes, strawberries, and a herb garden.

Six years ago, first to be planted were twelve fruit trees, one for each family that came to stay at Monte Cecilia House; a lemon, persimmon, feijoa and even a passion fruit vine. Not all survived, but this then led to the idea of creating an easy- to- work raised bed garden.

In 2005 one resident staying at Monte Cecilia House actually designed the layout for the present garden and staff took the initiative from there, and so the story of this garden began.

Funding became available from the CMDHB for a project that would raise awareness about diabetes and teach nutrition. Staff then introduced "From garden to plate".

The aims of the gardening and cooking classes are to empower families to: eat healthy, to learn how to be self sufficient, to learn about food grown in Aotearoa/ New Zealand and how to cook it.

It is also about learning to experiment, to have fun and join as a family, in the preparation of food and in sharing a meal together.

Awareness of onset of diabetes, obesity, and other health concerns is a subtle, but all too important aspect of the programme.

Once a week tutors, Yvonne Thomas and Mona Nimmo garden and cook with the families staying at Windrush Close in Mangere. All the produce is harvested straight from the garden.

At Christmas time we can reflect on the inspiration of new beginnings, new life, hope and possibility. A garden provides us with a good metaphor for this.

The life of this particular garden and all it provides for those living at Monte Cecilia House shows us all that when the conditions are right, when the seeds have been sown, good things will grow and lives will flourish.

***Born in the night, Mary's child,
a long way from your home.
Coming in need, Mary's child,
born in a borrowed room.***

***Clear shining light, Mary's child,
your face lights up our way;
light of the world, Mary's child,
dawn on our darkened day.***

Still no room at the Inn?

The Christmas story comes as good news to the poor. The first to hear it were the shepherds who survived on the fringe of society, prevented by their job from living as respectable citizens.

The star that shone in the east was seen by foreigners who travelled from far off to find the truth that locals could not see.

The central characters in this story were also outsiders. Not welcome in their own land, they were forced to take shelter briefly in a stable when their child was born.

They were then obliged to move on as refugees often are, because they were stateless and had no power to insist on their rights.

Our year ends as 'Occupy' demonstrators are moved on from one protest site after another. They too have not been welcome, because of their call for a fairer, more just society.

Homelessness is a reality in our day. For those without a place of their own, there may still be no room at the inn. Will a star shine for them this Christmas? Can we help them to hear good news, as we take to heart (see left) this contemporary carol? Dennis Horton, Trustee

Working for adequate, affordable and secure housing for all

At last a house of her own

I recently had the privilege of visiting Malia Fa'asavalu in her very first home. There have been a lot of firsts this year for this courageous woman. Malia and her two sons Emanuel and Samuel are for the first time living together as a family. Malia shared with me how this is the first time she has been able to be the mother she has longed to be for her sons.

Originally from Samoa, Malia came to NZ in 1999 to support her mother and her ailing father. Malia came to live at Monte Cecilia House in early 2011 because she had been living a very transient life, moving with her two boys between members of her extended family.

Until Malia came to live at Monte Cecilia House, she had never lived away from her family before. Her sons had not known Malia to be their Mother, because in an extended family situation there was no clear delineation of relationships, Malia explains. "They would call their Grandmother 'Mum' and me 'Aunty'. I had to say to my sons, I am not your Aunty, I am your Mother. Now they understand."

Monte was able to assist Malia in applying for a Housing NZ home for her and her boys. "I'm so happy to find my own house, for me and my kids. I couldn't do anything for my kids with my family, around all the time. Now I can and I'm very happy." says Malia.

Malia took charge of her finances for the very first time, she learnt how to use an ATM and took ownership of her Eftpos card for the first time. Malia learnt how much to take out each week, not from a budget but by routine and developing her own system. In this way she has been able to live within her means and save for the future.

The social work team then also supported Malia as she went to her sons' school to meet the boys' teachers for the very first time, to register with a doctor, to go to Work and Income NZ, Housing NZ to the bank, to go shopping at the supermarket and to take a taxi to the hospital; all for the first time.

What an incredible journey! With support from the team at Monte Malia has gained immense self confidence and is now able to stand on her own feet.



Malia Fa'asavalu [right] welcomes Vaima'a Memea (Housing Social Worker) into her new home.

Malia can now plan for the future, knowing she has the skills to survive and knowing she now has a supportive network of people in her life, willing to be there when she needs help.

Housing NZ has also supported Malia by adapting her house to accommodate her particular needs and to enable her to live independently.

Today Malia can confidently enjoy going shopping, cooking for her boys, doing homework with them both and creating a safe, comfortable home for them, too.

Friends of Monte donated household goods, which enabled Malia to furnish her new home. With what she saved whilst living at Monte Cecilia House she has been able to purchase a brand new fridge and washing machine.

Monte continues to support Malia, she will shortly begin private lessons to learn to read and then to learn basic mathematics.

Life is looking good. Malia finishes her conversation with me by saying that today she feels like she can do anything she puts her mind to. I think she's right.

Ruth Greenaway, Fundraiser

Wishing you and your family a wonderful Christmas



How you can help

If you or your parish want to make "A housing difference", please contact: David Zussman (09) 275-6661 ext 202 to explore ways to be involved.

If you wish to make a donation to Monte Cecilia Housing Trust

Name

Address

Please send me an automatic payment form

Please tick box \$20 \$50 \$100 Amount \$.....

Please make cheques payable to Monte Cecilia Housing Trust. Donations over \$5 are tax-deductible, and a receipt will be issued.

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For more on Monte, check our website www.montececilia.org.nz

Become a 'Friend of Monte' and help us continue to make a real difference in people's lives

Email: housing@montececilia.org.nz