

ON TRACK MERI KIRIHIMETE! DECEMBER 2023



ADVENTURE
SPECIALTIES TRUST

EST. 1984



TEENAGE GIRLS + MENTAL HEALTH

During Term 3, we ran an INSPIRE Adventure Therapy day programme (one day a week over eight weeks) for young women who have been struggling with their mental health.

Here are some quotes from the young women who attended:

*"I feel **hopeful** about my future and that **life is worth living**. Before this course, I saw no purpose in life. This course has made me see the beauty in life. I no longer feel alone."*

*"I have **learnt to trust my thoughts and opinions**. I have learnt how to handle my stress and calm myself down. This will help me to get better and recover from my depression."*

*"I have learnt new skills for problem solving. This course has **changed how I view life** and my purpose of living."*

*"It has been helpful to know how to **manage my feelings** and this has helped my relationships with my mum and my sister."*

*"I learnt that **there are always other people to help you** [when you are] in need, so in the future, when I am stressed, I can always ask for help."*

*"It has reminded me that there are others that have similar feelings about life and that **I am not alone**."*

Instructors April and Justine took the young women on a different Christchurch-based adventure each

week, including kayaking, coastal hīkoi (walk), high ropes confidence course, raft building, biking, and bush activities.

As well as the outdoor adventure activities, there was a daily theme which was woven into the activities and group discussions. The themes included:

- **Discovering your strengths** and building self-worth;
- Taha Hinengaro (wellbeing of the mind) and self-kindness;
- **Taha Wairua** (spirituality), awe and wonder, connection to the land and to nature;
- **Whanaungatanga** (family and community), our support networks, repairing and strengthening relationships;
- **Tools for building hauora** (health and wellbeing), managing anxiety, recognising glimmers of joy, mindfulness, gratitude.

Want to come along next time? Find out more about our INSPIRE programmes and Adventure Therapy on our website, or pop in for a chat and a cuppa!





KIDSCAN YOUTH COUNCIL

KidsCan is a New Zealand charity on a mission to help kiwi children who are living in poverty and going without essentials like food, warm clothing and shoes. KidsCan believes that “Education is a pathway out of poverty [but] children can’t learn if they are cold and hungry.”

One of KidsCan’s projects is the **KidsCan Youth Council**. It is a year-long scholarship programme which supports young people towards success, leadership and community engagement. The Youth Council is made up of ten students (aged 16-18) from all around Aotearoa New Zealand, who have been under-privileged or come from resilient backgrounds or who have benefitted from KidsCan programmes themselves. They are young people who have a **desire to help others** and want the opportunity to **have a leadership role in their communities**.

KidsCan partnered with us to create a three-day outdoor adventure programme which focused on supporting the Youth Council students in **gaining confidence and leadership skills**, plus developing individual goals for themselves.

Our instructors, Nat and Joel, took the group kayaking and hiking around Waitākere Ranges Regional Park. They also led the group in some leadership activities which focused on **understanding different values and different comfort levels** within a group. For example, they were

asked questions like “How comfortable do you feel in deep water?” or “How much do you value time alone by yourself?” or “How connected do you feel to your culture?” Seeing everyone’s different answers helped the students to **understand how we all have different values and experiences**, which, in turn, helps develop **self-awareness** as well as **empathy and understanding for others**.

After the programme, the students gave us some feedback: *“The group activities have helped me be able to talk and communicate with people I don’t know.” “I’ve learned to be ambitious [with my goals]. It could pay off.” “Our hike was so hard. It felt good to complete it, though.”*

Ray, the KidsCan co-ordinator, gave this feedback: *“Kayaking was a youth fav. **There was a good balance of education, skill, ease, exploration and playfulness.** The hike was incredible and a great challenge for the youth. [The instructors] both had a very relaxed nature which made it easy for youth to feel comfortable and safe around. Good safety and risk management. I look forward to working with Adventure Specialties Trust again!”*





WHY WE LOVE SMALL GROUPS

All our Adventure Therapy programmes are run as small groups (max 8-10 people) and they are really a form of group therapy. There are so many advantages to working with others in a group!

The benefits of small groups include: meeting other people who are in a similar situation to you, getting to know them, **making friends, trusting others, communicating your needs and emotions and ideas.** Especially for people who are anxious about social situations, it's an opportunity to practice so many skills and really **build confidence in a social setting.** All of these things are much harder to achieve in individual therapy.

We often find that one of the things the participants appreciate most is the **peer support** that comes from the group **sharing their experiences and thoughts and ideas with each other.**

Take, for example, our RESTORE programmes which have been running in Auckland and Christchurch this year.

RESTORE is for people who are off work for mental health reasons (like anxiety, depression, stress or burnout) and are on the Job Seekers benefit. We use Adventure Therapy to **support them on their journey towards hauora** (health and wellbeing). Check out the feedback that we have received from the participants:

*"It was comforting to learn that EVERYONE goes through stuff and **everyone struggles from time to time.**"*

"It gave me a reason to get out of bed and have interactions with people outside my immediate circle. Being able to have meaningful conversations impacted my day positively."

*"It's helped me realise that **people do care** and there are programmes that help bring change and help bring life back."*

*"This programme has made me realise how important connection is for my wellbeing. **Connecting with nature and people help to lift my mood and give me a sense of belonging.**"*

*"This programme has made a difference in multiple ways: communicating with others, feeling better in nature, different ways to look at things, and **feeling safer in the community.**"*

*"I'm more positive, confident and clearer about who I am and what brings me to life. I've learned that **I don't have to be perfect and giving my best is fine.** I've learned too that I have a lot to offer other people because of who I am. I have appreciated this opportunity. I am no longer suicidal, I have more hope and **can feel joy, self-pride and gratitude.**"*



WORD FROM THE CEO

Tim Wills

Meri Kirihimete!

I hope this year has been a fulfilling one and now you have some time to relax and enjoy a slower pace. Our staff are looking forward to a well-deserved break and also a slower pace, as we wind down for the year (although I'm sure many of them will go on personal adventures). As you read this newsletter, you will see that they haven't been sitting on their laurels and have been facilitating some **great adventurous programmes** and **bringing positive change and experiences** to so many.

I am proud of our team, who not only love the outdoor 'office' that they work in, but also **have a real, genuine care and concern** for the people they work with.

We are not just an 'activity provider'. We use the outdoors to facilitate **growth and change**. You will have read some of these stories in this newsletter.

On a more personal note, I would like to take this opportunity to **pay tribute to my mother**, who recently passed away at the age of 84, after a well-lived life. She was an extraordinary woman and a selfless servant,

quietly touching the lives of many—a fact that became evident during and after her funeral. Her life story was a reminder that our impact can extend far beyond what we may perceive. **We can never truly know the level of influence we have on someone's life.**

This leads us to the Christmas message of hope and goodwill. The story of a baby boy who grew up to influence many and who brought about transformative change in ways that we may never fully comprehend. May this Christmas be a time of **renewed hope** and a reminder that our actions can create that **transformative change**, like my mother did for so many, and as our mahi at Adventure Specialties Trust continues to do.

So, I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Cheers,



Tim Wills
CEO

SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

@adventurespecialtiestrust



DONATIONS

We appreciate your generous support! Your donation will go towards supporting a person struggling with mental health challenges, so that they can attend one of our Adventure Therapy programmes.

DEBIT OR CREDIT CARD: On our website www.adventurespecialties.co.nz/donate

INTERNET BANKING: Adventure Specialties Trust / account 06-0153-0109509-00

Please email accounts@adventurespecialties.co.nz to let us know of your donation, so that we can allocate it appropriately and send you a receipt.