

Ambury Park Centre Inc.



Ambury Park Centre
Riding therapy with a difference

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

2019

President's Annual Report 2019



Tena kotau katoa and welcome to members, visitors, staff, volunteers, friends and whanau,

2019 was a positive year for Ambury Park Centre as we were again fortunate to have the wonderful support of our valued charitable and community trusts, while the Ambury staff under excellent leadership of the Director/Principal, Vicky Cox, worked with dedication to ensure our therapy riders, school students and adult clients had the opportunities to reach their goals and aspirations. The riders, students and clients did Ambury proud with their efforts to achieve and overcome the various challenges.

To briefly summarise Ambury Park Centre comprises three programmes – Riding Therapy, Intensive and Remedial, a small Independent Secondary School that offers education for students who have otherwise not managed schooling elsewhere let alone experience success and a Vocational programme offering skills learning for adult clients with disabilities. The Centre began as a large undercover riding therapy centre in 1983 and was officially opened in 1985 by the then Governor General, Sir David Beatty. What we have today with developments over the years began with an idea of Lionel Otto closely supported by Maurice Paykel. The Centre has the very good fortune to have Mary Brook (Maurice's daughter) as the patron and Michael Otto (Lionel's son) as a great supporter and friend of the Centre. From the very beginning with Dr Jill Calveley, as the director, the goal of the Centre was to help change lives with the horse as the medium of that change for those involved, their whanau and the wider community. Interestingly Jill very early on saw that the Centre could extend its services to work with youth who were in various ways challenged and developed a programme involving the horses to therapeutically meet their needs.

During 2019 the numbers in Riding Therapy grew to 87 and as usual included children, adolescents and adults. The majority of the adult clients are from the Vocational group. That Marjolein, the Intensive Therapist, had introduced aspects of Hippotherapy to the intensive therapy was mentioned in the 2018 report. The therapy is currently described to include this and to have an emphasis on physiotherapy involving the movement of the horse. Following Marjolein attending a Hippotherapy conference and training in Lexington, Texas in March 2019, she made a power point presentation at the 2018 AGM that was both informative and exciting in many respects but particularly in describing how altering the gait of the horse can target specific disabilities. The relation between riding therapy, hippotherapy and physiotherapy have resulted in very successful outcomes. Marja, the Remedial therapist, and Marjolein collaborated with developments in the therapy programme and in ensuring the riders experienced progress and joy. This was enhanced by decorating the arena and creating costumes for special days. The programme also makes good use of the outdoors with riders enjoying fresh air and the different challenges and sensory experiences that riding in the outdoors provides. The physical and cognitive improvements from riding therapy

are apparent with improved balance, a person sitting upright for the first time or uttering a first word or sentence around a horse. Not so immediately obvious are the improvements that relate to behaviour, social confidence, learning and psychological well-being. Riding therapy is significant in helping to reduce anxiety. Teacher and whanau comment on such improvements is valuable feedback. The therapists report informally to whanau and clients during sessions and each term provide written reports on progress.

Two poignant examples of progress:

P. is a nine year old girl diagnosed with Cri Du Chat Syndrome and she loves the riding therapy/physiotherapy sessions at Ambury Park Centre where she gets to interact with horses and people. She initially presented with generalised low tone and this has an impact on her daily life. It makes all tasks e.g. getting dressed, walking, talking, sitting at a school desk etc. very hard work. Since she has had therapy with the use of the horse, her core strength/balance and concentration have hugely improved. Her walking pattern has changed from being wide based and heavy to being more fluent and faster and it is taking her less energy. She is now able to keep up with her peers in the school playground for longer periods. The improvement of her core strength has also impacted her diaphragm and this has improved her voice projection. She will call out to everyone that she is "coming out with Smudge". While P. is on the horse she is concentrating and enjoying all sorts of physical and mental challenges without realizing how hard she is working. She is starting to speak in longer sentences/able to reach for balls that are out of her immediate range/push and pull blocks/recognise letters and learning to count.

C. is 4 year old girl. She is diagnosed with a rare genetic disorder. She has significant developmental delay, visual impairment and seizures. C. has attended the riding therapy/physiotherapy sessions at Ambury Park Centre since March last year. To start with C. was tiring quickly and would not be able to keep her head up for more than about 30s when in a supported sitting position. She would need several break times during our sessions and she was the queen of power naps. She would spend most of her time well supported, either on her back or on her tummy, on the horse's back while enjoying the motion and sensory stimulation the horse was giving her. C. is now able to stay awake throughout most of the session and is able to keep her head up while looking around and listening to sounds. She will still need assistance to be able to sit up while on the moving surface. At home she can now sit up for up to 8 min without support while placed on the ground. While in her special seating system she has enough strength to reach and grasp a toy in front of her. C. is a happy little girl who loves songs and her pony.

The therapeutic influence of the horse permeates all that happens at Ambury Park Centre where taking part in riding, horse care and even mucking out leads to the students not only experiencing skills but importantly a relationship with a horse or horses. Sometimes it is the horse that is the first confidante. A different kind of horse whispering! This relationship, the individual learning programmes that are precisely tailored to a student's learning needs, empathetic and skilled staff led by a Director/Principal Vicky Cox who has the most apt knowledge and experience in learning needs and equine, and an idyllic rural environment combine to give the students the best chance to succeed and grow - in riding, learning, social skills and emotional and psychological well-being. Referrals continue to be made from Alternative Education, Oranga Tamariki, MOE, Schools, special schools, adolescent mental health (CFU, CAMHS), Intensive Wrap Around Service, Group Special Education, other agencies and whanau. It is clear that the students present with various and often complex needs that include challenges with learning, emotional and social stability, mental health, anxiety and syndromes to name some. Ambury offers something different that can most often

make a significant difference for 25-30 students. As most are aware the Centre employs teachers to cover the teaching of English (Literacy) and Mathematics and others in Equine to offer Equine theory including standards for NCEA. There is a very considerable range in learning needs amongst the students so the emphasis is working from where the students are at and gradually accelerating their learning.

In 2019 and now in 2020 there is a degree of shared teaching for Literacy with an emphasis on basing the learning on students' interests, which promotes learning. Since Term 2, 2019 Rebecca Woodward has led developments as Head of School. Where possible NCEA continues to be a focus, with one student completing NCEA Level 1 and others gaining credits towards their certificates in 2020. Three teacher aides, including one who has responsibility for administering the Te Kura Pounamu subjects that make up the curriculum load, support the student learning. The students are also able to access Art as the Centre employs an Art facilitator, who also provides a programme for the Vocational group. The other recent welcome to a leadership role is Indiana Metcalfe, appointed as the Art Facilitator in October. Indie has a degree in Fine Arts and experience with tutoring. This of course meant that Carlette, in this position for several years, left us for family reasons. The board is grateful for her contribution to the Centre. A stand-out event she long prepared for and held at the Centre in Term 4 2018 was an art exhibition of student and adult client art. Many paintings were sold.

Feedback to the students, whanau and relevant agencies is through informal contact and regular written reports. There is frequently positive feedback to the Centre. Perhaps the best feedback is seeing the students taking part in their routines and doing so with a sense of ownership of Ambury. This is their place.

A student's feedback from 2019:

"Ambury Park Centre has had a tremendous impact on my life. The school has helped me mentally and physically.....Mental illness has played a major role in my teenage years and this school has helped me.....I began to grow in self-confidence and understood the world is not as bad as it seemed to be.We get the rare opportunity to ride horses every single day other than Friday, which makes the school extra fun.....You get a life changing experience here at Ambury Park Centre. It is filled with staffs who want nothing but the best for you." (Excerpt from a student letter)

The third programme for Vocational Clients always has steady numbers between 27-29 clients. There are several referral agencies and families apply directly. Ambury Park Centre seems "a home away from home" for the adult clients who are such a bright, enthusiastic group as they go about their life skills routines. Keating Oakley-Browne continued as the coordinator for the Vocational Programme in 2019, supported by several support workers all of whom offer wonderful care and support for the clients. The life skills activities include cooking, horse care, and other Equine duties, literacy and numeracy skills, gardening and art. The other aspect of this programme is community participation that mostly relates to life skills in using public transport and community activities. Going to the gym, swimming and Zumba are examples that support social skills and healthy living. It is a varied and vibrant programme. As with the other programmes there are both informal and more formal reporting to the clients and whanau. The twice yearly formal reports include many photos of their activities that make the reporting more accessible to the clients. The client interests and goals are taken into consideration in the planning for community participation.

As well as the riding therapists, the Head of Equine Andrea Menzies, oversees other skilled staff. They include a student riding coach, two riding support staff, a stable manager and a stable assistant. Their skills enable the students to enjoy riding, learn about horse care and achieve learning goals, and all the while looking after the well-being of the horses.

Debra Moore, who was our Volunteer coordinator for many years and in a part time promotion role at the Centre, was appointed as Office Manager in Term 2 2019. Debra has embraced the position with enthusiasm and continues to support volunteer recruitment and the promotion of the Centre alongside Vicky. Debra has taken on advertising the holiday riding and horse mastership programme with positive outcomes of at least fifteen attending each day.

Brian Pilkington has become the Centre's maintenance person, whose work and advice for the Centre is very much appreciated. Brian has also managed projects for the Centre such as the Gateways project. Kay Pilkington gives of her time voluntarily to exercise the horses and assist in many other ways, including with events. The Pilkingtons are the Centre's closest neighbours (just at the gate) so fortunately they keep an eye out when the Centre is closed.

Vicky Cox is of course the Centre's leader, a role to which she has brought much innovation and vitality not only in supporting each programme but understanding and tending to the needs of all. Vicky, an experienced horse person, has a keen interest in the horse requirements for the Centre. She also has a firm grasp of the intricacies and requirements of the relationship with RDA. Vicky has worked with the Ministry of Education to secure more support for Ambury Park Centre in professional development, psychologist visits and real advisory support. She has also secured community nurse visits to check student health and well-being. These developments are coups that Vicky will be better able to expand on. In last year's report her introducing the PB4L (Positive Behaviour for Learning) was mentioned. This MOE funded PD is now in its second year with the values and associated practices in place. Other initiatives in 2019 were a day's MOE training on Understanding Behaviours and Responding Safely (UBRS). In essence examining how to recognise unsettled behaviours and how to prevent escalation. Also there was a day's training on recognising personality types and responding to their strengths and potential areas of weakness. The main focus was on the individual and what that meant as a whole staff. Vicky and some equine staff attended the RDA professional development and there was Equine training for all non-equine staff at the Centre

On behalf of the Board I sincerely thank Vicky Cox, the staff and volunteers for their efforts towards positive outcomes for the students and clients. Everyone strives to make a difference for our people.

The role of volunteers at Ambury Park Centre is immeasurable in the Centre being able to offer what it does safely and professionally. Debra Moore continues to have role in recruiting volunteers and volunteer training days. The majority of volunteers work with the therapy riding as leaders and side walkers but in 2019 this was extended to volunteering with horse care, as some favour helping in other ways. The volunteers' contributions to Ambury go well beyond their elected volunteering days. They are fore and central in every fundraising activity the Centre embarks on – car boot sale day, gingerbread horse drive, Ambury Farm day, film evenings and arena dinners. The board is so

very grateful for this wonderful support, and dependent upon it. There have again been several mainly corporate volunteer groups who have given days to the Centre for gardening and general clearing up. In 2019 these groups included Aiga Energy, ASB, PwC, Ernst and Young, Sovereign and ANZ.

As touched on above Vicky and Debra work to promote the Centre to the wider community, which involves keeping in touch with agencies from whom clients and students are referred. There were also promotional displays at suitable events in 2019 at the University of Auckland, UNITEC, Social Workers in Schools (Disability Connect), Ambury Farm Day and consultation with Z Energy. Vicky also is invited to speak at particular events and is frequently in communication with agencies and ministries. From this she secured five more Alternative Education placements for Ambury.

Related to promotion are the fundraising efforts in 2019. The first being the car boot sale come gala day in March. The day was rather damp, which did not dampen enthusiasm but did sales a bit as displays had to be hurriedly moved under cover. The purpose of this day is to raise funds for student and client activities outside the Centre. The most venturesome event was a Film Evening in September for 'Ride Like a Girl', at the Rialto in Newmarket. All 192 seats were sold with the price including a glass of wine or an ice-cream. It was a "buzzy" evening with the audience enormously positive about the movie. It was on many levels - horses and riders, perseverance and disability - apt for Ambury Park Centre. Thank you to Neil Rusden (Vice President) for organising the event and to Debra for her work with the administration. We were very fortunate to be fabulously supported. There was a huge drive to bake, ice and sell gingerbread horses for the annual sale of these as promoted by RDA. Trish, a support worker, even transported a pony to some schools along with the cookies for sale. This was brilliant. The Centre receives its own profit. The board thanks the many involved in this campaign. We have again profited from being a Good in the Hood Charity (Z Energy). Ambury Farm Day saw Ambury Park Centre providing horses for rides and staff and volunteers to lead. Although a little is made on the day, this day, is much more about the Centre contributing to the community it is in.

The 2019 Prize Giving, a celebration of all students and clients was a lovely occasion on a fine summer's day. The riding display went off well - an important occasion for the students to demonstrate what they have learned. As usual everything was well organised and the occasion warmly inclusive. A stand-out aspect was the Vocational clients rousing rendition of the waiata, Tutira Mai Nga Iwi.

All that happens at Ambury is dependent upon the much loved herd. They weave the underlying magic that helps to change lives, in enabling riding therapy and the therapeutic aspects of riding, horse care and perhaps above all the relationship with the horse. *'Domesticated horses have an advanced ability to assess a human's emotional well-being, having been side by side with humans for centuries. Horses "know" humans and will attempt to trust and partner with humans, to form relationships* **Horses are the epitome of relationship. Walk with them and let them teach you.'** (Equine Essence-North Carolina)

It was decided by the board in 2019 to form a committee, the Horse Welfare Group comprised of two board members (Vicky Latta and Caroline Grove), Vicky Cox and Andrea as Head of Equine and Cate as Stable Manager to analyse the performance of horses for Ambury's needs and work to

rejuvenate the herd. This has begun with replacing some horses with younger ones. In the past year eight horses have been procured or leased. There is further progress to be made but this group is working together to achieve this.

There is now in place a clearer routine developed by Vicky and the Equine staff for exercising the horses.

The Centre receives some funding from the Ministries of Education, Social Development and Health towards its programmes. The funding is relatively modest with the MOE funding being per capita only for a private school. Alternative Education and Oranga Tamariki students bring in funding and ORRS and IWS students teacher aide or teacher time.

With modest funding and the expense of maintaining the horses (the essence of what we offer) the Centre is in need of the wonderful contributions as grants and donations that it receives. The Centre is reliant upon extensive funding beyond ministerial contributions and fees that may apply. In 2019 the Centre was again blessed with many sources of grants and donations. The board, as always, is deeply grateful to the charitable trusts, community trusts, gaming trusts and individuals that support the Centre.

For many years several charitable, community trusts and other organisations have generously supported Ambury Park Centre. The Maurice Paykel Charitable Trust, Joyce Fisher Charitable Trust, Janet Fisher Trust, Lou and Iris Fisher Charitable Trust, and Woolf Fisher Trust, David & Peter Picot Charitable Trust, Foundation North, Kelliher Charitable Trust, Chenery Memorial Trust, Sir John Logan Campbell Residuary Estate, Geoff and Nell Erne Adams Charitable Trust, Samar Khand Trust, NZ Lottery Grants Board, ARA Lodge no. 348 IC Charitable Trust, Star of Auckland Lodge No 26, Ziera Shoes NZ Ltd, NZ Riding for the Disabled, Auckland Council – Mangere-Otahuhu Local Board, Mangere Market Trust, Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS), Rotary Club of Mangere, Wilson Home Trust and Grove Hardware Ltd.

Donations were also gratefully received from Warren and Caroline Grove, Doug and Adrienne Alderslade, Tim Chan, Vincent Maire, Mary Brook, Michael Otto, David Paykel, Gaynor and Bernard Brown, Doug Alexander, Ron Paterson, Aiga Energy Trust Ltd. (Z Good in the Hood) and other donors. There are numerous other incidental donations from Board members.

Ambury has considerable on-going support from Gaming Trusts which included in 2019 Blue Waters Community Trust, Blue Sky Community Trust, Pub Charity Ltd, Four Winds Foundation Ltd, Lion Foundation, New Zealand Community Trust, North & South Trust, One Foundation, The Southern Trust, Mt Wellington Foundation and Trillian Trust.

The Ambury Park Riding for Disabled Foundation donated the last of its funds to the Centre in 2019. It is to be wound up in 2020.

The Centre is most fortunate to receive this funding which is also a re-affirmation of what it offers and achieves. The board is mindful of and extremely grateful to all of its donors.

In 2019 it was a pleasure to have three highly valued trusts visit the Centre, meet with board members and the Director Principal, look around the Centre and in two instances hold their monthly meetings at the Centre. The trusts that visited were the Joyce Fisher Charitable Trust, the Maurice Paykel Charitable Trust and the Chenery Trust. They were singularly positive experiences for the Centre.

2019 saw two capital projects completed. The first was the exterior painting of its buildings, which was mostly funded by the Joyce Fisher Charitable Trust. The Director/Principal's office was also painted. The Mangere Markets Trust funded the Gateways project, a solution to a long suffered inconvenience. The quagmire entrances to the paddocks were dug out and replaced with crushed concrete.

Recruiting students and clients and working successfully with them in our programmes is largely dependent upon our very good relationships with many providers and service groups. It is clearly advantageous for the clients, the Centre and the agencies that these relationships are strong and respectful. The agencies that the Centre worked closely with in ensuring the best support was available for the students and clients were in 2019 Oranga Tamariki, Group Special Education, Ministries of Education, Social Welfare and Health, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Whirinaki, Kari Centre, Marinoto West, Marinoto North), the Child and Family Unit, Youth Justice, Youth Transition Programme (Tu Rangatahi), ACC, Barnardos, the Wilson Home, Alternative Education (Central and South Auckland), Ministry IWS Programme, Te Kahu Toi, many schools, special schools, other youth and adult providers and transition coordinators. The Centre's relationship with the Ministry of Education has been strengthened through Vicky's efforts to access Professional Development and personnel support not usually available to an Independent School. The liaison with the agencies involved is important in seeking or supporting professional interventions from counsellors, psychologists, social workers, teachers and mental health key workers and others.

Centre wide and School strategic documents were completed and evaluated for goals attained and variance. The Centre's 10 year business maintenance plan was also evaluated and any variance noted. Policies were updated and some written.

While the staff and volunteers work with dedication to achieve successful outcomes for the Centre's programmes so do the members of the board. I sincerely thank the members of the board for this and for their support. The board includes Vice President Neil Rusden, with expertise in marketing, design and events, Treasurer Doug Alexander, Secretary Caroline Grove, Accounts Person Claire Lingman, and Director/Principal Vicky Cox. All members of the board make valuable contributions. Vicky Latta's skills are much appreciated with some legal areas and with horse knowledge. Deane Maule as a chartered accountant and Janet Hepi make valued contributions when most needed. In 2019 Christine O'Brien, Auckland Council, Mangere and Otahuhu Local Board representative, Steve Whelan and Kuruho Wereta from Parks kept the board updated about Council developments and Belinda Sharp as staff representative is a reliable conduit between the board and the staff. (In January 2020 Anna Houston, a former Director/Principal of Ambury park Centre, who holds a responsible position in Education as the Cluster Manager for RTLB in the Otahuhu/Mangere area joined the board. In the May zoom meeting we met our very recent member from the Local Board, Dr Neru Leavasa who has been most helpful in tracking down the whereabouts of our Licence to Operate. Neru is a doctor in the Mangere area). The board is

fortunate to have Local board and Parks representation to keep the Centre informed of upcoming events, planning and political changes that affect the Centre.

In 2019 Christine, Steve and Kuruho worked to keep the Centre's application for a renewal of the Ambury Park Centre's Licence to Operate on its current site in motion. The document was completed with the Centre's contributions to the community included early this year. (A month ago the Licence was sent and signed by the board president. We are awaiting a signed copy from Council). The Licence expires 30 November, 2020, and as said last year, Ambury began the renewal process in August 2018.

Again the board is immeasurably grateful for the continued BDO (formerly PKF Ross Melville) pro bono auditing of the Centre's accounts and writing of the Performance Report. We sincerely thank them once again.

I and all here welcome Mary Brook tonight as both a friend of the Centre and patron since 2003. Mary's support for the Centre is very much appreciated in many ways including through the Maurice Paykel Charitable Trust. Thank you Mary from the board and from me for your ongoing support.

I welcome Michael Otto, a longtime friend and supporter of the Centre here tonight. Michael has been very proactive in supporting our dinners with guests and auction items. In 2018 Michael supported a successful approach to the Woolf Fisher Trust for funding. Thank you Michael for being there for us as well.

In all programmes the horse is the agent of positive change. The Centre's mantra is that what it offers helps to change lives. The physical muscular strength and improved balance from riding therapy is well known but it is clear from observation, agencies and whanau feedback that it impacts behaviours, social skills, cognitive development (including speech) and psychological well-being. This as we know is true for the students and adult clients who have access to riding, a relationship with the horse and an opportunity to care for a horse. These are not the only elements that contribute to their education, social, behavioural, psychological and psychiatric improvements but it is Ambury's unique point of difference. The other elements are the individualised and careful planning for each person and the caring relationships with the staff and volunteers. The student's letter summarised in this report expresses this poignantly.

That Ambury Park Centre is able to so operate is dependent upon the extensive funding it receives from trusts, ministries and individuals and referring agencies and whanau. There is a belief that Ambury does make a difference. This is attributable to the dedicated work of the Director/Principal, staff, the volunteers and friends of the Centre, and the board. I sincerely thank all involved.

Gaynor Brown

Gaynor Brown QSM
President
Ambury Park Centre
29 June, 2019