



Annual General Meeting 2010

People First New Zealand held a successful AGM In November in Dunedin thanks to the Dunedin People First and Gerry O' Farrell, Southern Region Coordinator.

Along with the National Committee and staff, members, volunteers and friends from Dunedin, Gore, and Nelson attended.

For the first time since People First set up, members voted to make changes to the constitution.

At the AGM, guest speaker Tania Thomas, Deputy Commissioner, Health and Disability Commission, was interviewed by Dunedin leaders who had made up a set of questions to ask her. Her interview is printed in this newsletter.

Paul Milner, from the Donald Beasley Institute, presented Mark Grantham's film about his life which shows how he sponsors children in need overseas. Mark is a new People First member and is currently leading a Speaking Up course in Auckland.

Brigit Mirfin-Veitch, People First Advisor, led a session on Tricky topics - What are they? and What should People First do about them? Members had a lot to say and we ran out of time. We need to keep talking about Tricky topics.

Following the AGM we all had lunch and then enjoyed a bus trip looking at all the sights Dunedin has to offer.

Everyone agreed that it was a fantastic time, we learnt lots and had fun. Thanks very much to Gerry, Felicity, Rosemary, Phyllis and the Dunedin Committee for all their hard work to make the AGM another great People First event.

Look out for this year's AGM which will be held in Palmerston North in November.



From National Chairperson, Graeme Parish

Kia ora

At last year's AGM People First made two changes to the constitution. The first change to the constitution means we can now have a National Vice Chairperson and Rosemary Scully was voted into this role. Congratulations Rosemary.

The second change means when a Regional Chair cannot come to a National Committee meeting the regions Vice Chair can attend and have voting rights. This means all the regions should be represented at all national meetings and participate in making the important decisions for People First.

Earlier this year People First had their say to the government on the special education review. We would like New Zealand to stick to the words in the United Nations convention about the rights of Disabled people and we think it's time to get rid of the word "special." To read more about what we said go to the People First website (www.peoplefirst.org.nz).

People First are very pleased to be involved in a coalition of Disabled peoples organisations

who are looking at how New Zealand is doing against the United Nations convention. This Coalition is doing a project which will include lots of interviews of Disabled people.



I am looking forward to the two forums we are hosting in June called, *A Place of our own: From here to there and back again. Living with the legacy of institutionalisation*. At these forums we will show our documentary and launch our new book, both of these tell the stories of four people who used to live in institutions. The people at the forums will also have time to talk about topics that come from the film. Spaces are limited so if you have not already registered there is more information about these in this newsletter and on the People First website.

Keep up all the good work in the local groups and regions.

Nothing about us without us.

Graeme Parish
National Chairperson



People First AGM

Questions for Tania Thomas
Health and Disability Deputy Commissioner

- **Can you tell us where you have worked and why you became involved working with people with disabilities?**

My friend's dad worked at the Mangere Training Hospital and I thought he had a great job. He loved his job so I wanted a job like his.

I became involved with people with disabilities at the age of 18 when I was a weekend big sister for a boy living with Down syndrome living at the Mangere Training School.

At 20 I was the matron of a community home for people living with mental illness.

I have worked at the Foundation of the Blind where I taught daily living skills and mobility. I

was there for 14 years and had five different jobs. When I left the Foundation I was in charge of all the rehabilitation services.

I worked at Presbyterian Support where I managed the child and family services.

- **What sort of things do you enjoy about your job?**

I love my job. I love meeting all the different people and learning about their lives. I like helping people sort their worries out and know their rights. I like helping people to stand up for themselves.

- **What can be difficult?**

I hear some very sad stories about people who have been treated badly by service providers and carers.

[More questions and answers page 3](#)

Sometimes people tell me lies so they won't get into trouble for being mean, unkind or bad at their job to the people they are meant to be looking after.

It is also difficult to get disabled people to speak up about bad things that might be happening to them. I always tell people to 'tell someone' if you are unhappy.

You can always get help from an advocate just call 0800 555 050. This is a free number that you can call anywhere in the country. Advocates are free and they are on your side. They can help you sort problems out with your staff or carer or service provider.

- **If you meet people who still do not know about their rights what do you do?**

I talk to them about their rights, I give them information and the free calling advocacy service number.

I can also arrange for someone to come and give a talk to groups of people who don't know about their rights. This is a great way to learn about your rights with lots of fun exercises and a great DVD. These talks are free.

Where do you think disability services are going in the future?

I think money for disability support services will be harder to get because New Zealand has a lot of money problems. I think the Government is working out how to do the best with the money they have. It may mean some changes to your services.

Some good ideas came out of the Disability Inquiry to make life better for people with disabilities. I think we can look forward to seeing some good changes. I look forward to seeing better assessments with disabled people and their families having more say in the assessment process.

The United Nations Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities is a positive step in getting people to include everyone's needs. It will be great to see disability services really taking the Convention seriously.

I think the time is right for disabled people to be more demanding about what they want and about their rights.

- **What role do you see for People First in that?**

People first can make sure they keep listening to their members. Make members concerns and ideas are known by disability service providers, health providers and the Government.

People first can also work to get more members and to support People First members to be leaders in their communities.

Members need to make sure they let their communities know what they are working on and what help and resources they need.

Encourage members to 'tell someone' if things are not good. Encourage members to speak up about bad services and staff who don't do a good job.

- **We don't always get the supports we want. What can we do about this?**

You can talk to the people who work with you and if you don't get what you want you can talk to a manager.

You can always take someone with you for support so you don't have to do it by yourself.

You can ask for help as a whole group. Sometimes talking as a group is less scary than being on your own.

You can talk to an advocate who can help you to talk to the right people about getting the right support.

You can make a complaint by calling 0800 112233 if you think it will be too hard for an advocate to help you.

- **How can more of our members find out about their health and disability rights?**

You can ask an advocate to come and tell you about your rights by calling 0800 555 050.

You can go to our website www.hdc.org.nz.

You can call us on our free calling number 0800 112233 and someone will talk to you or you might want some of our free easy read brochures and posters.

There is also information on tape available from your local library on our service.

We also have information in different languages and on audio tapes.

I am also pleased that Cindy has offered to help me update our 'You have rights' booklet so it is easier for people with learning disabilities to understand.

THE ADVOCACY TEAM



From the Left: Dave Wickham, Gerry O'Farrell, Ezekiel Robson, Stewart Haig, Rainus Baker, Pam Shanks, Phyllis McPherson, Hamish Taverner, Kaeti Rigarsford, Margaret Boyes, Bill Dalwood. Taken after the initial 3 days of training at Victoria University, November, 2009.

The setting up of Works4Us is nearly finished and now it's time for the roll out of the service. The following article introduces you to the Works4Us team; the National Manager and the twelve advocates who have all attended workshops about 'Your Rights at Work'. In some areas we are already representing Disabled workers at the next round of Minimum Wage Exemption Permits and we look forward to advocating alongside many more Disabled workers in the future.



Introducing Dave Wickham.

As the National Manager I am proud to be working with this team and looking forward to the challenges of providing Disabled workers with the best possible representation and advocacy when they are seeking work or renewing their Employment Agreements. I come to this role from working for many years in Unions so I am pleased that this service is focusing on some of the most vulnerable workers in New Zealand. The team will continue to provide information and education to both Employees and their Employers to ensure everyone knows their rights and so disabled workers can enjoy the same rights and conditions as other workers.



Ezekiel Robson is a disability advocate, interested in greater awareness and inclusion of people with disabilities in health and education settings. He has a background in volunteering, youth work and group facilitation. Ezekiel looks forward to ensuring all workers enjoy the same rights and real pay for real work, regardless of any disability. Ezekiel will be working as an Advocacy Coordinator in the Northern region.



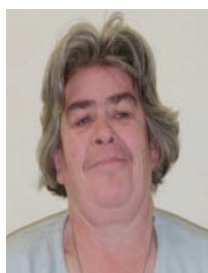
My name is **Bill Dalwood**, I am 45 years old and live on Auckland's North Shore with my wife and two children.

I have worked in the disability rights field for 20 years, mostly in Camden, London. I work at Devonport Primary School with children with spectrum disorder as well as other disability. I also volunteer for Auckland Citizen Advocacy. I am pleased to be working as an Advocacy Coordinator in the Northern region.



Raymond Thoumine

Raymond has worked as a Caregiver in Thames. He came to Auckland in 2008 and started work at the Disabled Citizens Society in Dominion Road. Three days a week he works on a MWEF as a general hand and the other two days he runs their shop as a Volunteer. He sells the product, works the till, and answers the phone for the whole organisation. Given this history Raymond is in a unique position to advise and advocate for Disabled workers who are working in a Business Enterprise or who are seeking work in a Business Enterprise.



Linda Harwood

Linda has worked as a car groomer, a college caterer (has a catering Certificate), served Fast Foods at K.F.C and now is directly employed by the Warehouse to help clean their Newmarket store two mornings per week. She brings a wealth of working experience in Open Employment to the role of workplace advocacy. Given her experience Linda wants to share this knowledge with other disabled workers who are either looking for work or already working.



Margaret Boyes

Margaret has worked in the disability sector for over 15 years in a range of roles supporting people to be aware of their entitlements and to look at how they can lead a rich and rewarding life. As well as being coming on board as an Advocacy Coordinator for Works4Us she also works for Voice Advocacy Trust in Tauranga providing advocacy in a range of areas including education, service provision, finance, employment, transport, housing, WINZ, ACC, future planning and safe guarding. Margaret will take up her position later in the year and work alongside Rainus in the Midland region.



Hi I am **Rainus Baker** from Whakatane

I have had lots of different work experience. I was a "Trolleyologist" at New World and have worked at Subway and at Valley Road Wreckers. My interest in advocacy comes from my membership with People First NZ, the "Partners in Policy" course and my time representing People First on the Ministry of Health Disability Services Consumer Consortium.



Hi, I am **Kaeti Rigarsford**. I have been involved in the disability sector for over 35 years. It is a passion of mine both from a personal perspective and working with and for people with disabilities. Hamish and I will be covering the Central region.



Hello I am **Hamish Taverner**. I had my own lawn mowing business in Marton for 12 years and have also worked at the Pioneer New World in Palmerston North. I presently work at St James School supervising the boys at lunch time and have another part time job at the NZ Animal Breeding Trust.

I have competed at the Special Olympics and won a medal at the Asia-Pacific games in 1996. I am now a Global Messenger for the Special Olympics.

I have been an active member of People First since 1998, and a delegate to the IHC NZ Council.

Presently I am a member of the IHC Advocacy Advisory Committee and a SAMS Board member. I look forward to the challenges of this work in the Central Region



Hi, my name is **Stewart Haig**. I am training and working in the People First Southern Office. I also go to all types of meetings so I can speak-up for people with learning disability. I want to play a part in helping people get fair working conditions and wages in the future.

Before I worked in the office I worked in a factory job for 22 years.

I am an advocate with 'Works4us'. I attended a 4-day training workshop. Those 4 days were positive and we learned a lot about advocacy. My long term goal is to get people with all types of disabilities a better wage, fair work conditions, and to help them feel confident in the workplace.



My name is **Pam Shanks** and I am the Works4Us Advocacy Coordinator for the Midsouth region.

I find the work I do with People First extremely rewarding and I am employed as the People First Midsouth Regional Coordinator and assist the local Christchurch group. I have also recently attended the 4-day training workshop with 'Works4Us'. Stewart and I are both excited about the work ahead to assist people with learning disability to know more about their rights at work..



Hi I am **Phyllis McPherson**, Works4us Advocate. I am also employed by People First to coordinate the national membership database. In the past I have been a Service Advisor for the Pact group where I had responsibility as an advocate for a group and represented them in trying to improve the service. I have also been a cleaner. I will be working with Gerry covering the Southern region



My name is **Gerry O'Farrell** and I started my career in the disability field by working for L'Arche, which is a worldwide federation of communities for people with learning disabilities. From there I came to NZ and worked for IHC and then as an Independent Advocate for people being resettled from Cherry Farm Hospital. After 5 years I changed roles and became a home dad looking after our two young children. It was at that time I that I volunteered to assist the People First Dunedin local group and as well as being a Works4US Advocacy Coordinator I am also People First Southern Regional Coordinator.

Works4 Us can:

- advocate for any Disabled worker who is being asked to accept a minimum wage exemption permit whether they are working in a Business Enterprise or in Open Employment.
- help any Disabled worker in settling their employment agreement with their employer.
- provide up-to-date information about your rights at work.
- run small workshops at a one day course registered with the Department of Labour. This course is based around the highly recommended workbook "Work and Your Rights in New Zealand."



For more information call Dave on Wellington:

(04) 381 3244

Free phone: 0800 40 40 49

Email: dave@peoplefirst.org.nz

Works4Us
Employment Advocacy Service

A People First New Zealand event.

A PLACE OF OUR OWN : FROM HERE TO THERE AND BACK AGAIN

- Living with legacy of institutionalisation

These forums offer the chance to witness the journeys of four individuals with learning disabilities from institutions to community as told to People First New Zealand and discuss the important issues these stories generate.

The documentary and the book called 'A Place of our Own' will be launched at these events.

Register now, there are a few spaces left at these great People First events.

Christchurch
Wednesday 9 June 2010
9.30am – 3.30pm
Lattimer Hotel, Lattimer Square

Hamilton
Tuesday 22 June 2010
9.30am – 3.30pm
Airport Motor Inn, Airport Road

To register contact Cindy Johns or Crystal Fang on 04 3813242 or email mail@peoplefirst.org.nz

For more information go to **www.peoplefirst.org.nz**

These forums are
kindly funded by





Contacts

National Office

Address: Level 4,
173-175 Victoria Street,
Wellington 6011

Mail Address:

PO Box 9199,
Marion Square,
Wellington 6141
Phone: 0800 20 60 70
(04) 381 3242
Fax: (04) 381 3242
mail@peoplefirst.org.nz
www.peoplefirst.org.nz

National Manager:

Cindy Johns
(04) 381 3242
(027) 684 1061
cindyjohns@peoplefirst.org.nz

National Finance & Office Manager:

Crystal Fang
(04) 381 3242
(027) 688 8048
crystalfang@peoplefirst.org.nz

Works 4Us Manager:

Dave Wickham
(04) 381 3244
(027) 248 0032
0800 40 40 49
dave@peoplefirst.org.nz

Northern Region

David Hughes (Chair)

Niharika Puri (Co-ordinator)
(09) 579 0525
(021) 068 1781
Email: niharika@peoplefirst.org.nz

Midland Region

Rachel Trubnik (Chair)

Delwyn Martin (Co-ordinator)
(06) 751 0874
delwyn@peoplefirst.org.nz

Top of South Region

Michael Aldridge (Chair)

Frances Rae (Co-ordinator)
(03) 548 1423
frances@peoplefirst.org.nz

Central Region

Morgan Smith (Chair)
(021) 048 9670

Kaeti Rigalsford (North Island
Team Leader, Co-ordinator)
(04) 381 4588
(027) 575 4000
kaeti@peoplefirst.org.nz

Mid South Region

Graeme Parish (Chair)
(03) 359 5070
graemeparish@clear.net.nz

Pam Shanks (South Island Team
Leader, Co-ordinator)
(03) 981 6067
(027) 440 0279
pam@peoplefirst.org.nz

Southern Region

Rosemary Scully (Chair)
(03) 455 1323

Gerry O'Farrell (Co-ordinator)
(03) 456 1345
(027) 242 4916
gerry@peoplefirst.org.nz

People First NZ want to thank the organisations below for their financial support

Ministry of Health

NZ Lottery Grants Board

Telecom

Community Organisation Grant Scheme

Ministry of Social Development

J.R.McKenzie Trust

ASB Community Trust

Frozen Funds Trust