



Leading People First NZ - Past, Present and Future

In December last year People First held its second national leadership forum together with the national AGM in Nelson.

The theme for the forum was 'Leading People First NZ – past, present and future'.

Five members from each region and staff attended the forum and made presentations about the leadership projects they had been involved with in 2011.

These projects included a fantastic presentation based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, called 'Who wants a passport to life?' made by the Southern group and which was filmed at their presentation at the 'Everybody In: Disability Studies Conference' in Dunedin.

Guest speakers included People First Life Member, Robert Martin and Lorna Sullivan, who is the Chief Executive for Imagine Better and one of the advisors for the People First National Committee. They both spoke about how to be a good leader.

At the AGM, David Rutherford, Chief Human Rights Commissioner was the guest and he was interviewed by five members of People First Top of the South region about his role.

People First thanks Te Pou for funding on-going leadership development in the regions and for making the national leadership forum possible. People First is very pleased to have received this funding again for 2012. We look forward to hearing about the creative and inspiring leadership work that is being done right now in the regions at this year's forum, which will be held in Rotorua in November.





From National Chairperson, Michael Aldridge

Kia Ora everyone

People First is very proud to be a DPO (Disabled Persons Organisation) this means we are governed by Disabled people only. Along with other DPO's People First is part of the UN Convention Coalition which has an official role in monitoring the UN Convention in New Zealand. This year's monitoring has started and there are forums in some cities and an online survey that Disabled people can fill out. This monitoring gives Disabled people a chance to have their say about their life and if they are getting all their rights.

We also know that's it is very important for people with a learning disability to know about the Convention and their rights in it so we have made a training course about it.

I was very proud to lead the AGM in Nelson at the end of last year. It was great to have the Chief Human Rights Commissioner at the AGM and I think the Top of the South group did a good job of interviewing him. People First is all about having your rights so it is good to keep connected to the Human Rights Commission and their work and make sure they know what we do.



David Rutherford, Chief Human Rights Commissioner

Already this year the National Committee has developed some new strategic goals for People First and have started working to achieve them.

We will be doing leadership development again in the regions and have another national leadership forum planned for the end of the year in Rotorua.

It was great to go to Melbourne in March to work with SARU Self Advocacy Resource Unit. We shared about People First New Zealand and learnt a lot about how Self Advocacy works in Victoria.

At the Imagine Better conference in June, which will be held in Hamilton, I will be presenting the Leona Gitmans self-advocacy award. It is always an honour for People First to present this award in recognition of great achievements in the area of self-advocacy. People First will also be presenting the 'Who wants a passport to life?' film and Dunedin member, Phyllis McPherson will be presenting on how individualised funding works for her.

I am pleased to let you know we have received another donation from the Gitmans family so we can give out Start Up grants again this year. There is more information about this in this newsletter.

Kia kaha - stay strong
Michael Aldridge

Sharing knowledge between NZ and Australia



In March Michael Aldridge, National Chairperson and Cindy Johns, National Manager travelled to Melbourne, Australia to meet with self-advocates and staff connected with SARU – Self Advocacy Resource Unit. They also attended the SARU 2012 Conference ‘You Be the Judge – Disability and Advocacy System’.

SARU supports lots of self advocacy groups

across the state of Victoria and also provides training and resources for people with learning disability about rights and self-advocacy.

Michael presented about People First and was also a panel member on a talk about employment. Michael said the conference was accessible. “It was great was having coloured paper on the walls so I knew where to go and the conference book available in easy read”.

This trip came from developing relationships with SARU in early 2011 at a conference in Geelong, Victoria and during a visit from SARU to New Zealand later in 2011 where they met with People First members in a few places around New Zealand. We look forward to strengthening this relationship in the future!

People First Southern Advocates

In loving memory of Avis Hunter and Peter Stevens.

Avis Hunter

Avis Hunter died on 17th March after a short period of illness. She was a long-time member of People First.

Avis was an inspiring self-advocate who wrote a book about her life and the time she spent in institutions. Avis spoke at many conferences both nationally and internationally and worked closely with the staff and researchers at the Donald Beasley Institute in Dunedin.

Avis helped pave the way for people with learning disability in New Zealand to speak up about what had happened to them and she will be missed by her many friends.

Peter Stevens

Peter sadly passed away on 26th March from a battle with cancer.

He was a member of the People First southern group and had also been filmed for the Works4Us DVD ‘A job just like anyone else: Peter at work’.

In the film, Peter shared what a day at his job was like, working in open employment at a local supermarket. Peter was a lovely man with a great sense of humour and such a positive outlook on life.

“Everyday I get on the bus I think it’s going to be a positive day and if you have the right attitude for the job then everyone around you says “oh gee you’re a positive fella”.

It makes your day go well if you have a positive attitude towards others and it makes you feel alive.”

Peter was a wonderful self-advocate and People First will miss him dearly.



(from L to R: Peter Stevens and Dave Wickham at Works4Us Workshop)



Works4Us – where to from here?

For the past four years People First NZ has been working on a project called Works4Us, an employment advocacy service.

Works4Us Manager, Dave Wickham, has worked very hard to get people around New Zealand talking about employment issues for people with learning disability and trying to improve what support is available for people who work.

Works4Us has created a list of quality resources, including:

- The Easy-Read 'Individual Employment Agreement'
- A job just like anyone else: Peter at work' DVD
- A job just like anyone else: Fiona at work' DVD
- The 'Work and Your Rights' course book and training CD (versions 1 and 2)

The project has also seen Employment Advocates from all around NZ participate in training to deliver the 'Work and Your Rights' course. The course has been presented in many schools (to transition students), workplaces and groups. People First has given the resources to teachers and services to pass on the knowledge to more people.

Works4Us will end its work with a series of forums in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin. The

purpose of these forums is to invite people from across the disability and work sectors and ask the important questions:

- What has the Works4Us project achieved?
- Where do we go from here?

With the end of the project People First must also say goodbye to Works4Us Manager, Dave Wickham. Dave has been a wonderful member of the team for the past three years and has done some amazing work. We will miss his experience and his passion.

We wish him well for the future.

People First will be keeping the name - Works4Us which was created by Susan MacDonald, past National Chairperson, and the 0800 phone number. Having a job, keeping your job and getting your rights at work will continue to be part of People First's work. We will promote people with learning disability as workers and encourage employers to provide opportunities. People First wants to also continue delivering the 'Work and your rights' training and making and giving out resources, however we will need to seek new funding opportunities to do this.



Want help to set up a business? – People First **START-UP** Grant

People First is very pleased to announce the Leona Gitmans Te Aranga Trust - **START-UP** grant is available again this year.

This **START-UP** grant is a small amount of money to assist you to get the things you need to start your own business.

Last year People First assisted three people with learning disability to start their own small business.

Here is some more information

People First NZ's **START-UP** Grant

- Do you have a learning disability?
- Are you starting your own business?
- Do you need some money to help you?



People First NZ, through the Leona Gitmans Te Aranga Trust, has a **START-UP** grant you might be interested in.



This **START-UP** grant is a small amount of money to assist you to get the things you need to start your own business.



This year People First NZ would like to help some people with learning disability start up their own business.



To apply for a **START-UP** grant we need to have some information about you and your business idea.



You will need to fill in a form and send it to People First.



Then at a meeting in August the People First National Committee will make a decision about who they will help this year.



For more information or a form to apply for the **START-UP** grant contact Cindy Johns email: cindyjohns@peoplefirst.org.nz or phone **0800 20 60 70**

News from National Office

Introducing the new Midland Coordinator



Hi my name is Debi Hayden and I am really excited to be part of the People First team.

I have a background in supporting people with a disability in the community, to advocate for themselves and their rights.

I look forward to meeting everyone.

Change of staff - Project Coordinator



Janet Doughty, Project Coordinator at National Office will be taking one year off from her work at People First.

Janet is going on maternity leave for a year. She will be travelling to Fiji with her family to adopt their son and to bring him home to New Zealand to brighten their lives.

People First wishes Janet and her family all the best for the big adventure!



People First has employed a new Project Coordinator. Her name is Sue Hobbs and she will do Janet's job for the next 12 months.

Sue lives in Auckland and has been doing some work for People First with the Keeping safe, staying safe project.

Sue will be working on funding applications and doing Easy Read translations.

Welcome to People First Sue!

People First leading the way

People First members have wanted to change the name 'Invalid's Benefit' for some time. With the government's changes to the benefit system the name is finally going. However the name that Minister Bennett had chosen was 'Supported Living'.

People First asked members what they thought of the name the government had chosen and the members all agreed that it would be very confusing as it is the name of a disability support service, which many members receive.

Members liked the name 'Living payment' as they

said it describes what you do with your money. We talked to the other DPOs (Disabled Persons Organisations) and Disability organisations around NZ who also agreed to support the name 'Living payment'. Then a letter was written to Minister Bennett asking her to please change the name to 'Living payment'.

We are now waiting to hear back from the Minister and we hope that she agrees to change the name.

It was great to have the agreement from the whole disability sector and make sure that Disabled people's voices were heard at the highest level!

Where are our local groups?

People First NZ has local groups all over the country. Some of these groups still need help.

Maybe you could help or know someone who could?

Here is a list of local groups that are active or wanting to set up.

- Active Groups
- Planned Groups



If you would like to help a local group or to find out more information please contact Cindy Johns cindyjohns@peoplefirst.org.nz or 0800 20 60 70 or 04 381 3242

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Disability Information Advisory Service

DIAS



If you have any questions or concerns about learning disability call People First New Zealand. We can advise you where to go to get help or give you information that you need.

Call us on Wellington

04 381 3242 or free phone

0800 20 60 70

Email: **mail@peoplefirst.org.nz**

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

Ministry of Health

Ministry of Social Development

NZ Lottery Grants Board

Telecom

Community Organisation Grant Scheme

Frozen Funds Trust

Te Pou o Te Whakaaro Nui

IHC Foundation

The Gitmans family