



Simon Atkinson from Christchurch travels to Japan!

Young Core Leaders of Civil Society Group Development Programme 2009 Japanese Mission.



Simon at an evening gathering in Tokyo

I was selected to represent New Zealand's disability and volunteering sector, on the Young Core Leaders of Civil Society Groups Development Program's Japanese Mission, in January 2009. There were also people from Germany and Great Britain.

On our 16-day visit to Japan, I learned many things – I learned that in Japan, volunteering is done differently to the way it is done in Germany, United Kingdom and New Zealand.

Visiting Japan was a great experience – there were so many things that were new for me to see.

The people who greeted us at the airport were very friendly and well organised. It helped me feel safe and in good hands. We stayed in Tokyo for a few days and then visited Miyazaki – another city in Japan. Then we returned to Tokyo for two days.

At the forums I was part of group of people who work with Disabled people and volunteers.

The issues we talked about were: inclusive education, community involvement and accessibility. We visited an Elementary School. I was impressed because it was a very inclusive school. They welcomed us in a very positive way.

With the time I had for myself I looked at the shops and libraries. I really enjoyed the scenery.

What interests me is that volunteering in Japan is very strong because Japanese people feel it is important for everyone to work and learn a lot, and they take pride in the work they do. But, the Japanese government needs to give more support to their volunteer leaders.

It was wonderful to learn how strongly Germany backs volunteering. German youth volunteering is especially amazing. The German government supports it strongly and volunteering is a very important part of German society. I think their volunteer system would be a good one for Japan to look at and learn from.

It was very interesting to see that volunteers are valued in England's communities and that the New Zealand government is fully aware of and supports the role of volunteers in the community – but there is always a need for more resources and funding.



Simon with fellow delegates

To have volunteers, who are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the area they deal with, is a wonderful asset for all communities in the world. We must respect them for their work.

Arigato Gozaimasu (Thank You Everyone)

Graeme Parish from Christchurch is voted in as the People First National Chairperson



There is a saying by Henry Ford,

“Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success.”

Hi, I’m Graeme Parish.

I was delighted to be voted in as the National Chairperson of People First in February. It has been my dream for the last four years.

I am also the Chairperson of People First Mid-South Region. Also I am on the National Executive of DPA and a few other committees in Christchurch.

Last year I was awarded the Leona Gitman Te Aranga Award from People First, which I was very delighted to get because that really showed me how much work I have done.

I want to empower members of the National Committee to have more confidence to have their say and be more active in the meetings.

We have still got a long way to go in New Zealand for Disabled people to have a better life in the

community. We are making progress in some areas but there are some areas like getting Disabled people into work, having more say in the services we get and those in independent living to have better networks of friends.

I am afraid that we are slowly seeing a decaying of quality of services around NZ. We have got to keep our eyes and ears open to make sure that services for Disabled people don’t get worse.

One of my strongest beliefs is that everything is like a giant jigsaw puzzle. There are bits of it that are not quite joining or working properly together. For people to have a good life in the community, services need to communicate with each other better.

For us to go ahead we need to work more closely together in the disability field. If we can do this we will all become more powerful.

People First Employment Advocacy Service: **Works 4US** is getting started



Workers
This is a Service that
can advocate for and
with you at work



- We can tell you about your rights at work.
- We can help you understand your work agreement



- We can talk to you about the Minimum Wage Exemption.
- We can support you with your Minimum Wage Exemption.



- We can talk to you about any work problems you may have.



For more information call Dave on

Wellington: 381 3244

Free phone: 0800 40 40 49

Email: dave@peoplefirst.org.nz



People First Coordinator for the Northern Region

Welcome aboard to our new Northern Region Coordinator Niharika Puri

Niharika writes.....

I've recently decided to go back to University to continue my studies in Psychology. Before this, I worked with IHC/IDEA for a year as a receptionist at the Northern Regional Office. I'm really looking forward to working with People First, as I'm a firm believer in the fair and equal treatment of all people, regardless of what walk of life they come from.

To contact Niharika: Niharika@peoplefirst.org.nz or 021 068 1781

Watch out next edition for profiles for the rest of our regional teams....

A sad end to a People First Volunteer for the Blenheim group

Rex Watchman was hit by a train and died in February. Rex was 79 years old.

Rex gave his time to the People First group in Blenheim and will be sadly missed by the members. He also volunteered for Rotary, The Salvation Army, Alzheimer's Society, IHC and the Marlborough Food Bank.

Rex paid special attention to all the members of the group and if he wasn't at a meeting people would be asking "Where's Rex" "Is he coming?" "Is he alright?"

Rex often helped with transport, going out for meals, elections and just keeping the group rolling.

His sound advice was welcomed by the members and he will be greatly missed by all.



Rest in peace Rex

Report from People First Rangiora

- Stewart Haig

I have got some news about Rangiora People First. I talked to Rea, our Assistant last month about our group in Rangiora. I know Rea might be leaving. We got some funding for meetings and things but not for paying a support person. Rea has been working for nothing for 2 years and can't afford to help us any more. We may have to find a new Assistant. Some services will not allow us to get our members together without a support person being there. Because members who live in residential services can only come to meetings by the services' van, they often can't come if the van is being used for something else.

It's been difficult to get new members because even though we put posters up there have been no enquiries. Also if we don't have meetings there is nothing for people to come to. If people live in Kaiapoi it's too far for us to go and get them. No one will bring them. A lot of people don't know how to use buses and because we live in the country you have to wait an hour if you miss one. We don't have our own van or someone to drive one!

I am now a member of the DPA Christchurch Committee. I am also now Vice President of the People First Mid South Region and working in the People First Southern office one morning a week. This means I can represent people with all disabilities and get all the issues that are out there. I can make it better for the community.



Greetings from People First Dunedin

Happy New Year to Everyone

Welcome to 2009. Hope you had a good break. We are looking forward to a great year for People First in Dunedin. A special welcome to new members. Great to have you come along. If you have any ideas for our meetings please feel free to suggest them.

Phyllis MacPherson
President People First Dunedin
Ph: 03 477 9134



People First Ashburton:

We have started off the year with enthusiasm and have set the dates for the next few month's meetings. We recently had a BBQ at Kath's house and we really enjoyed getting together. It was a nice day and Sue cooked a yummy BBQ!

The speakers we have arranged for the next few months are: the traffic department to talk about safety on the road and a lady from ACC talking about accidents in the home. We have planned to have a movie night and fish-n-chip night too.

We are only a small group but we have lots of fun!!

Written by Sonia Townley, secretary for the Ashburton group



Back row: Kath, Peter, Sue, David, Stuart, Dawn, Joanne, Sonia

National Staff profiles....



Janet Doughty, National Manager

I've been with People First now for 8 ½ years: 5 years at the National Office and 3 ½ years with 3 local groups in Wellington and the Hutt Valley. I really love my job and the people I work with.

I love listening to music and cooking - oh and eating too, and reading books! My husband Warren is from Fiji and we live on the sunshine coast in the Wellington Region, Waikanae Beach. We are expecting our first baby at the end of August which we are really excited about. I plan to take maternity leave for a year from the end of July.

I think People First is a great organisation and have enjoyed seeing our members grow and develop into great leaders across New Zealand.



Crystal Fang, National Finance and Office Manager.

Before joining People First New Zealand in November 2004, I spent 12 years working in China as an office manager in the foreign trade & shipping industry. This special work experience, background and skills are bringing new fresh air to People First.

I have a very happy family. My family enjoys living in Wellington very much. I like reading, surfing the internet, playing table-tennis, singing & dancing. Sometimes I also travel overseas with my husband and daughter.



Dave Wickham, Manager for the Employment Advocacy

I have only been working in this role for 2 and a half months and feel very excited about the challenges of setting up the Employment Advocacy Service. It is a four year project so I have time to get to meet you all and work with you in making sure Disabled workers have the same rights as all other workers.

I come from a Union background and have worked with a lot of groups fighting for social justice mainly in the anti racist field.

I am married to Mary Ellen and we have three daughters 30, 25 and 21 (I was a house husband for 4 years) and enjoy reading. I am a passable cook and enjoy the odd game of golf.



Don't forget to call the DIAS service if you have any questions or concerns about learning disability. We can help advise you where to go to get help or information that you may need.

**Call us on Wellington 04 381 3242 or
free phone 0800 20 60 70**

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