

# The Encourager

The magazine of Elevate Christian Disability Trust

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## Welcome

Camps have been an integral part of our ministry since the early years; creating places of belonging and genuine connection for both campers and volunteers. Providing opportunities for people with disabilities to lead and serve others. And sometimes, opportunities for attitudes and beliefs about disability to be challenged and changed. All while allowing space for ministry, prayer and worship, where God has consistently shown up and touched countless lives.

Camps really are important! Which is why we have focused this issue of The Encourager on camps. This year's Auckland CFFD Camp saw the building of friendships and community. Volunteers at both the Nelson and Auckland Family Camps helped create a relaxed and supportive environment for the families. CBM's Kids Connect Camp, which began with support from Elevate, held their first day camp. All of these camps have seen those genuine connections formed or rekindled, and I know you will enjoy reading about them in this issue.

I have been excited to hear of the work in the Philippines by Hebron Disability Services, who are seeing so much growth in those who are attending. The update from them in this issue is so encouraging and includes a wonderful testimony.

Our upcoming Elevate National Camp will be the first in-person camp in three years! Are you planning to 'Come Celebrate' with us? We are looking forward to connecting again with campers and volunteers, both old and new. As you can imagine, there are many logistical and financial challenges to holding a camp of this scale. Volunteers are not only needed for the weekend but also with preparations.

Would you join us in prayer? For the connections formed at these camps to strengthen. And for God to impact the people who will come to both the Hebron Disability Services Camp and the Elevate National Camp.

### Blessings

**Kirsty Armitage | Director**

### Sign Up to our E-Newsletter

If you would like to sign up to receive our monthly E-newsletter you can do so by scanning the QR code or by contacting us at the office.





## Courageous Love

**2 Timothy 1:7** “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.” It’s one of my favourite verses at the moment. It’s definitely been one of my battle Bible verses this year.

We have such an incredible and generous God who gives us His love. We don’t need to earn it, He just gives it to us in abundance. And a great definition for love in the Bible comes from **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

In the New Testament, Jesus talks about being the true vine and we are the branches and the importance of really attaching ourselves to Him and having the foundation of our lives in Him. Then we are able

to produce good fruits. And as we know in **Galatians 5**, it talks about love being a fruit of the Spirit. If we really want to produce love as a fruit of the Spirit and love others, how can we actually attach ourselves to God in our day-to-day lives?

I know from the outside, I know how to act and look like a Christian but this year I’ve really learnt the importance of having a daily and personal effort to actually become dependent on God. And I’ve learnt that the closer we become to God and act like Jesus as He was on earth, the easier it is to produce these good fruits.

But I know it’s definitely not easy loving others. Maybe there is someone at school or at university or in your work-place that you just clash with all the time. Maybe there is someone who has hurt you that you find difficult to love. Or maybe there is someone in your family or a relationship you really need to reconcile.

Trust me, I find it hard myself to love every single person.

One thing that I do to remind myself to be more loving to others, is I’ll read that same verse in 1 Corinthians and I’ll replace the word ‘love’ with my own name. So instead, I’ll say, Olivia is patient, Olivia is kind. Olivia does not envy, I do not boast, I am not proud, I do not dishonour others, I am not self-seeking and so on. And it’s a really good, practical reminder on how I can be more like God and loving others.

So, let’s make it a daily reminder of God’s perfect love for us and to express that to others, even people that are difficult to love. Because if God can love us, as imperfect as we are, we should also be able to love others in our world.

**By Olivia Shivas**

*Taken from National Camp Online 2020*





# Four Decades of National Camps!

*There have been so many incredible stories and highlights from National Camps over the years. We only could fit a very few highlights and wonderful stories in this timeline.*

## Baptism is always a highlight of National Camp

One reflected on the first camp at Matamata “I have many moving memories, but the one which was my real highlight was the afternoon baptismal service with the hot pool ringed by wheelchairs, as nine went through the waters of baptism.” Shirley Roberts, who used a wheelchair, was one of the people who were baptized. The following day as she used her headpiece to type out on her communicator: ‘I am glad to type my testimony. I invited Jesus to be my saviour. I love Him. CFFD helps me. I love you all.’”

## People traveled from far away

Clive Kemp a man who was severely disabled and had speech difficulties was very determined to be at camp. He sat in his wheelchair at the back of a van for six hours travelling to camp. One helper said hearing him pray was her highlight. In following years, groups from Christchurch and Dunedin came to camp in Matamata. One year, John travelled 2 days by railway all the way from Gore!

## Delwin traveled to Camp in an air ambulance

Delwin Gray was a young mother in Hāwera, Taranaki. She had multiple sclerosis and was admitted to hospital two years after she was diagnosed. Her friend, Colleen, had been praying for her, but realized Delwin needed a touch of God. While she was in hospital, Colleen, heard that Margie Willers was in town. So, she asked Margie to come visit Delwin. When Margie visited, both of them got along very well. Margie told her about National Camp and offered to pay for her fee if she would come to camp. This gave Delwin a tremendous boost, a new goal, to go to

camp! But how? She could not bear a long car trip. A helicopter would cost \$1,800, but an air ambulance cost less \$650. Margie wrote to a minister in a nearby town. The church community of the minister generously gave money towards getting Delwin to Matamata. Delwin was transported to camp via an air ambulance.

The message of forgiveness really spoke to Delwin. She was held back by an area of unforgiveness in her life. She dealt with the issue as soon as she returned from camp. People started to notice a real change in Delwin. She became a more positive person and giving to others. National Camp gave her a new zest for life.

## Fred went home with a Sparkle

Before Fred Mathews came to his first camp in 1990 he never had any purpose in life, did not want to go out much, and as a result his family mostly left him at home. But his coming to that first camp changed all that. After that camp, Fred’s family said, “he sparkled”. He had more freedom in himself, he tried to do a lot more things on his own initiative, and has been trying to walk, and succeeding. Fred began wanting to go on more outings, and even went in his wheelchair to the marae. A Bible study group started up at his home. The family also changed and were more willing to take Fred out as Fred’s life now had more meaning and purpose in it.

## Devine moments between helpers and buddies

“Gary had locked on to me and I couldn’t let go. Emotion moved me to a few tears of deep and sincere love for him. I just longed for the day when Gary would have his wizened body, filled as it is with immense disability, transformed into his new glorious heavenly, immortal, eternal dwelling. I realised in that moment as we looked at each other that unless a great miracle took place this side of eternity, Gary

1980s

1990s



would not get his new body until he saw Jesus. There was such a quietness in the room. God's presence was real and I felt He moved me to ask Gary, "How will I recognise you in heaven when you get your new body? You won't be lying on a wheelchair and you will have teeth and you'll be dancing and so much more."

Nick Booth wrote, It was then that Gary did about all he could do. He raised his left arm, feeble and crippled as it is. (His right arm permanently hangs limp.) I felt invited by him to come closer. I reached down and adorable Gary Hollister took me into his chest and hugged me tight. When I stepped back moments later, in the language of gums and lips, he said "Jesus love you" ... and he just kept saying Jesus name. My eyes welled with tears. It was such a precious time."

### **National Camp changes people's perspectives about Disabilities**

Peter White wrote, "I found that this camp changed the way I see disabilities, and more specifically the people who live with them. It did not take very long before I stopped seeing the actual disabilities and saw the personalities and people and began to accept them as I would a normal person. (I am having difficulties writing this because it seems so condescending to talk of "these" people, "them" or "disabled" as if categorizing them.) Sure they need some assistance to do some tasks or even some of life's basic necessities, but you quickly allow for this, help as needed, and get on with whatever needs to be done, or both want to do."

### **Julian didn't feel like the odd one out**

"This is my first visit to the Totara Springs Christian Camp. Upon arrival it hit me, 18 year's old, and for the first time ever, I do not stand out in the crowd. Nobody is staring at me. I am just another pebble on the beach. I feel overcome with happiness, and could almost cry tears of joy."

### **YWAM Student**

Ellen Miller, a YWAM student said, "God is so good. I want to thank God for how His glory shines in so many different ways. This weekend as a first time helper I have had the privilege to serve God and people with disabilities. When I first heard we were coming here I was so excited to see what God was going to teach me. This weekend God revealed to me that He uses everyone, no matter their appearance, to glorify His kingdom. I thank God that He made us all unique in His image so that we can tell all people about Him. Thank you for a fabulous weekend! God bless you all."

### **Mandy attended OVER 25 CAMPS!**

Mandy Lee used an electric wheelchair and she lived with cerebral palsy. She wrote in the 2018 National Camp magazine, "I have been coming to camp for more than 25 years.

I love coming to camp and seeing people. Some people would be upset if I didn't come – that I know for sure! I have dressed up as Mary, an Angel and as many other people. I love the Saturday night dancing. This is a special place to have fun, to meet new people and to see old friends and to meet with Jesus! When you come here, you are sure to want to come back!"

2000s

2010s

**Please donate to our National Camp and Family Camps fund.**



Your donation helps people to attend and ensures we continue to create more impacting moments.



# Auckland CFFD Camp - Building Friendships and Community

It's been three years since the last National Camp was in Matamata and last year, we had to cancel Auckland CFFD Camp. So, with much anticipation as the committee began planning for the 2023 camp at Carey Park, there was also much prayer for it to go ahead. With all the work involved in preparing a weekend camp for people with disabilities, it was encouraging to hear several excited campers saying they couldn't wait to come.

Auckland CFFD camps at Carey Park have been running for many years, which is a major highlight in the CFFD calendar. Being a smaller camp, it has more of a community feel. Also, it gives a chance for some campers to attend for a day. We also have many volunteers come along to help with the afternoon activities.

The significance of camp for many of us is having a weekend away, letting our hair down, having fun and building new friendships. One person said that it is a place where we are on equal par, not seeing one as disabled or one being able-bodied. In fact, it's a place where we help and learn from each other, especially in the buddy system role.

"Auckland CFFD Camp means a lot to me," says Julie Swan, who regularly attends the camps. "I don't have friends who visit or talk to me in person now. So going to camp means I can be myself and don't need to worry if I am struggling. I like the worship and praise. The atmosphere is awesome. The games are really cool and cater for all of us. Camp has a big impact on me, as I get to talk to people and make true friends. This is 'me time', as I am a carer for my mother, so I am exhausted. Camp gives me some time to myself."



Moreover, camp is not just all about having fun and making friends; we also get amazing teaching. Each year has a theme. The sermons often challenge campers to set new goals for themselves. This year was no exception. The theme was 'Reboot, Rebuild and Reset'. This really spoke to Tracey Powell, who is blind and has CP. She wanted to attempt things she hadn't done before. One of them was being able to peel an orange. What an achievement that was! She was so excited. Another new activity was line dancing. We're sure Tracy is looking at setting more new goals this year.

Fiona was looking forward to going to camp this year. "Unfortunately, I couldn't go to camp due to illness in my family," she says. "Although I couldn't be at camp, I had a fantastic time organising things for it. For example, preparing the craft boxes and ensuring we had all sorts of activities on hand. As always there was a lot of hype and excitement for us on the committee leading up to camp.

"Craft at camp is a much-loved activity by many campers and I have had the privilege to arrange the craft component for our camps over several years. I cannot rave enough about it.

I was gutted about missing out. I checked into the Facebook group to keep up with what was happening," says Fiona.







“My heart was so warmed when I saw a young teen who was joining in for his first time at camp. He was jamming with the bros and banging out beats on a drum. He is now quite an accomplished drummer, I hear. Why I was so warmed was due to the fact I was this young teen’s preschool teacher!

“It makes me feel quite emotional seeing the success of our camp,” says Fiona. “At camp, barriers that are often found in the disabled community are erased and unconditional love and inclusion is met. Not half-heartedly but in a way that scaffolds our members’ needs to give them experiences that many able people take for granted. Inclusion is always our goal. Another thing that warms me to camp is how our volunteers come back year after year to help again and again and again. They often bring their friends, throwing them into quite an infectious and enjoyable experience.

“Being on the committee I get to hear the reflections and feedback once camp is over. Everyone who came to camp said they felt at home. At camp, past connections are rekindled and new connections are made. I love how out-of-towners also make the effort to come,



including our so-willing camp worship team. They have been such an inspiration, time and time again. Now that’s a big ‘wow’ in my eyes. Looking through my lens, I think God has truly blessed us with the provisions through funding, helpers, sponsors, donations and much more. If you have not been to one of our Auckland camps, please give it a go. I hope to see you next year!”

We would like to thank COGS for funding that made it possible to reduce the fees for campers to attend.



### Written by Jean Griffiths & Fiona Thomas

*Jean is the communication liaison for CFFD branches as well as serving on Auckland CFFD committee for nearly 25yrs. Jean got Rheumatoid Arthritis at the age of 17 years old.*

*Fiona has been on the Auckland CFFD committee for the last 8 years, following many years of involvement. She has an amputation and is also hearing impaired.*





# CBM Kids Connect Camp – Being an Archaeologist for a Day



Kids Connect camp looked a little different this year with a change of location and a change of format. After 13 years of using the local scout camp for a weekend, we found ourselves in the position of having to choose between no camp at all or a day camp format. As Kids Connect 2022 was cancelled due to Covid, we were eager to hold the camp again, so we chose to run a day camp using the Elevate facilities in Onehunga.

We were grateful to the Elevate team for their support and willingness to help make the day such a success. It was a blessing to use such lovely amenities!

This was our second year of providing experience for a group of students from King-sway Christian School. A small group of students, plus two teachers, joined us for the day. These students were buddied with children who have disabilities, being a friend to them and helping out with activities throughout the day. For the buddies, this is part of their missions experience. It opens their eyes and fosters an empathy for children and young people living with a disability.

Our camp theme was “Diggin’ It” and many of our activities were theme based. For part of the day, the children became junior archaeologists, exploring the grounds of Elevate for treasure, making fossils and creating their own creatures



from discovered ‘bones’. As usual, a highlight of the camp was seeing all of the creative costumes that followed the camp theme. We had many archaeologists, some gardeners and one girl even wore her self-designed t-shirt of a dog “diggin’ it”! We loved how the leaders and buddies enthusiastically joined in wearing fun costumes. It really built an atmosphere of fun for the children.

As well as all the fun activities, Biblical teaching was woven into the day, encouraging the children to dig into God’s Word and discover the treasures found there.

The children all went home with a wide array of activities and artwork that they had completed during the day. We were even able to bless each child with an archaeology kit to take home as a further activity.

We could not run Kids Connect without all of the volunteers. A huge thank you goes to all the leaders, buddies, kitchen staff and all those who worked behind the scenes setting up equipment. All the preparation and hard work is rewarded by seeing happy children leaving at the end of the day, with new friendships formed and many hugs and smiles.

**Written by Lyn Anderson**

*Lyn is a staff member of Children’s Bible Ministries (CBM). Her husband, John, is a longtime volunteer at the Elevate Drop-in Centre, following a brain hemorrhage 23 years ago.*





# Hebron Disability Services

Praise God for His goodness and faithfulness to Hebron Disability Service. Praise God for the passion, compassion and faithfulness of all staff and volunteers in the ministry.

## John 15:5 (NIV)

*“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”*

Our regular fellowship held in HDS Function Hall has now been expanded and can comfortably fit everyone in. In our program we are intentionally training our people with a disability to get involved in the program by opening and closing prayer, sharing a testimony, and leading worship. It is so good to see them growing in confidence in the abilities and gifting God has given them.

Rodelio Gutierrez 35 years old, has used crutches since an infant. He is a man of courage, a man that never gave up in his dream to finish his studies and to have a better a life. In his studies he encounters many difficulties his family were not supportive to him. Going to school was quite hard because he used his hand to operate the tri bike and has financial incapability especially when the pandemic burst out but despite of those difficulties, he was determined to reach his dream. He said to himself “I am the son of God, and many people encourage me and trusted me that I can do it”. At last, in May 2023, he graduated in grade 12 and now he is enrolled in college to pursue his dream to finish the Information Technology course and become successful to this field. He wants to help his family and be an inspiration to the people with disabilities that if you have faith and trust to God he will make a way, “For I can do everything

through Christ, who gives me strength.”

**Philippians 4:13.** Jesus will give us courage and strength to make it happen. Rodelio is so grateful for his sponsors for their faithful and unwavering support over many years.

God promises you an overflowing life, not an overwhelmed life.

Jesus said, “I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness” **(John 10:10 GNT).**

God is our true source of energy and power. If we try to go through life on our own power, we’re going to be overwhelmed. But if we’re connected to him, we’ll have all the power we need. Or, as the Bible says, “Your joy will overflow!” **(John 15:11 NLT)**

## HDS CAMP 28th - 29th July 2023

We are so excited to be running our Hebron Disabilities Services Camp once again since Covid. The HDS team are busy in the preparation for this special time. We are trusting the Lord for and incredible move of His spirit over the peoples live who come. Please pray for the camp.

As we continue to serve let’s remember to stay connected to Jesus in all we do as we serve Him with all our might! **John 15:5 (NIV)**

*Hebron Disability Services Team. HDS is a ministry of Children’s Bible Ministries Philippines and Elevate Christian Disability Trust.*

**God Bless and much love and appreciation  
Dionisio, Marina, Andrea, Bricio, Ed and Monica**







# Elevate Family Camps

Elevate Family Camps are a Christ-centred weekend of family, fun and fellowship for families affected by disabilities. This year's theme for both camps in Nelson and Auckland was "Running on Empty". With the past few years that we've had, we could probably all relate to this year's theme. But for families affected by disabilities, things can feel even harder. Both camps were an amazing weekend and a welcomed respite for the families.

Our parent speakers at both camps were Elevate staff member Teremoana Va'a and her husband Lani Va'a. They set the tone for the parents with their honest and vulnerable sharing. We had a group of wonderful volunteers who were engaged and looked for opportunities to serve. It was a privilege to spend the time with these wonderful people and see the connections formed over the two weekends.

Nelson camp had only four families, and the almost constant rain, actually helped build the community feel and the genuine connections right from the first evening of camp. The family worship time was a highlight at Auckland camp. Kids playing musical instruments and were free to move around or dance making a joyful noise.

Families from Nelson Family Camp providing feedback said that the camp was "just a big dose of support and encouragement – and connection with others." When asked what the most challenging thing about was, one family said, "deciding what to eat!". And if you're thinking of coming next year, one family's recommendation is, "just come. Be encouraged/supported/spoiled!"

Families at the Auckland camp expressed their gratitude for camp. Rebecca said, "Thanks for the team, we had the best weekend. See you next year!" Louise said in her feedback, "Thank you for all the work put into making the camp happen! I was grateful to come even just for the short time. It was nice to see Kevin happy there and mix with some others in similar situations. God bless you all."



Please donate to our National Camp and Family Camps fund. Your donation helps people to attend and ensures we continue to create more impacting moments.



# Volunteer Spotlight



My name is Kayla. I go to Connect Baptist in Auckland. I attend the youth group there and I am learning Te Reo with some other people from my church.

I first heard about Elevate camps from my friend Julia, who asked me if I wanted to come to the first

Elevate Family Camp. I've volunteered at all the Elevate Family Camps, except for the Nelson one this year. I've also volunteered at the last Elevate National Camp and I'm looking forward to this year's one.

Being a volunteer is something I enjoy doing. You get to meet people and make new friends. Because it's a smaller camp you can easily get to know people. I keep in touch with some of the volunteers and families I have met.

I have always liked helping people, even in school I would run up to people in wheelchairs to offer to help. Helping people who can't do things is something that motivates me to volunteer. I can relate to that as I have special needs myself.

Elevate Family Camp is a fun and accepting environment. No one judges you. If someone told me they were thinking of volunteering at an Elevate camp I would say 'It's amazing! You have fun and meet great people. Try it!'

## Get involved!

### How can you be involved with Elevate?

There are many ways that you can become involved with Elevate Christian Disability Trust.

**Prayer** - Pray for the ministry, the people, the provision, the opportunities!

**Promotion** - Let others know about us! Give The Encourager magazine to someone who needs it today. Like and share our different Facebook pages and posts. Read our blog articles and share them with your church, friends and whānau.

**Practical** - Come and volunteer at the Drop-in centre, regional branches, national or regional camps or at the national support office in Onehunga.

**Provision** - by donation, automatic payment, sponsorship, bequest, or through goods and services.

#### **We would love to hear from you!**

Have you been encouraged or impacted by one of our articles? Do you know someone whose story would encourage others?

Email us at [encourager@elevate.org.nz](mailto:encourager@elevate.org.nz)  
Phone us on **09 636 4763**

Contact us at [info@elevate.org.nz](mailto:info@elevate.org.nz) to find out more or to register your skills/abilities so we can link you in to our next suitable project or event. Also, get in contact to find out where we have regional branches around New Zealand.

#### **Donate**

To make a donation to Elevate Christian Disability Trust using a Credit Card please visit <https://elevate.org.nz/support-us/> or Internet Banking.

#### **Our bank account details are:**

Elevate Christian Disability Trust  
**Account:** 01-0142-0029706-00 (ANZ).  
Please include your name and the word **"DONATION"** as a reference.

**DONATE**



**SCAN ME**

## Do You Want to Hear Some Good News?

**God loves you dearly!** John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

**He offers you salvation from the wrong things you have done!** Ephesians 2:8 “God saved you through faith as an act of kindness. You had nothing to do with it. Being saved is a gift from God.”

**You can belong to His family and have a fresh start!** 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new.”

**God wants you to have hope!** Romans 15:13 “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

*If you would like to become a Christian (a follower of Christ) you could pray something like the following. Lord, I admit that I have done things that are wrong. Thank you that you have died to take away all my sins. Please forgive me. I receive your forgiveness now. I want to live for you, and live life with you, every day. Thank you for loving me. I receive your love. Amen*

**Did you pray this prayer?** We would love to connect with you and help you find a church to connect with. Feel free to email us at [prayer@elevate.org.nz](mailto:prayer@elevate.org.nz) or phone us on **09 636 4763**.

### Elevate Christian Disability Trust

For over 40 years we have been working to create places of belonging, hope and encouragement, to empower people with disability to live to their full potential in Christ.

#### Our Ministries:

- **CFFD** (Christian Fellowship for Disabled) mainly for people with physical disabilities
- **Joy Ministries** mainly for those with intellectual disabilities
- **Emmanuel** for families with children who have disabilities
- **Torch** for those who are blind or visually impaired
- **Drop-in Centre** in Auckland where we run a day programme for people with disabilities

“We  
welcome  
your  
enquiry”

#### NATIONAL SUPPORT OFFICE

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