

ON A MISSION

CHRISTMAS EDITION

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wellingtoncitymission
HEI WHAKAMARU O TE KOROWAI
O TE PANEPANE O TE IKA A MAUI



Moving Mountains

Through courage, connection and your support, Denis has moved mountains to create a new life for himself and his daughter.

I had a hard upbringing in Porirua, with a lot of heavy violence around me. From when I was little, I felt safer on the street than I did at home, and I ended up joining a gang. All the beliefs from that lifestyle got embedded into my head, and glorifying negative behaviours was normal. I was living a life of crime and drug addiction, and from when I was 19 I started going in and out of jail. I didn't know it at the time, but I was masking a lot of trauma, and I was too ashamed to ask for help.

In 2015, my daughter, Tuwhareiti, was born. I thought that would change me straight away, but it didn't. I couldn't just snap out of it, my issues were deep within my core and I was stuck in addiction and selfishness. Tuwhareiti wasn't living with me at the time, but the environment she was in wasn't healthy either. Thankfully my sister eventually got full custody of her, so she was in a safe place. But the seed was planted in me. I wanted to be better for her.

It wasn't until I had a near-death experience the last time I went to jail, that I realised I'd hit rock bottom, and I needed to wake up and change my life. I fully committed to rehab for the first time. It gave me a safe



space to open up, and I started to realise what trauma actually was. I stopped bottling everything up, and started taking ownership and humbling myself. I graduated from rehab in May last year. That was the first time I'd ever completed anything worthwhile, but I knew I needed to live somewhere other than Porirua to keep on track.

Moving to the Mission's Te Pā Pori was massive, and it's changed who I am. You see how being there for people and showing them a little bit of love can go a long way. I started wanting to help other people feel good about themselves, too. I took the opportunity to help run programmes and serve as a mentor for the other manuhiri. There were heaps of hurt and broken men who were in addiction but were still hiding away in their rooms, so we created a group where people felt acknowledged and cared for. I found new qualities that I didn't know were inside me, and I learnt how to be Denis – to take off my masks and be my authentic self.

My daughter was able to stay with me in Te Pā Pori on weekends and in the school holidays, but finding a house for us has been my biggest goal. And thanks to



• Denis with his daughter, Tuwhareiti

the advocacy and support of my awesome kaiarahi, Alisha, I've just moved into my own two-bedroom flat in town! This is the first time I've ever had my name on a lease, and having that moment of getting to ask my daughter which room she wanted was really special. The Mission even donated a bed and drawers so she could be here straight away.

I've also found an amazing relationship with my partner, Georgia. She's got her own story of addiction and trauma, and has been separated from her kids in Australia. She's going on eight months clean now, has a good job, and is as beautiful as ever. We've both found out what love means together, and I'll never do anything to jeopardise that.

Most importantly my daughter is thriving. Being with her is a big drive for me, and it keeps me sober and moving forward. She's just turned ten, and she wants to hang out with me and have real conversations. I'm proud that I've become a good role model for her, because I never want her to experience any of the emotions I did when I was little.

Coming into Christmas I think about how I haven't been out of jail for many of her birthdays or Christmases, and last year, I really wanted to make it up to her. I was able to take some of my Kiwisaver out to really put on a

special day, and I got to visit the Mission Toy Store as well. That was really cool, and I remember on Christmas Day, seeing her get that feeling of 'Are these for me?!' The smile on her face lasted for weeks. The best part was that I could actually be present with her, because **what she would have wanted most of all was my time.**



1,025 children

were provided with presents through our Christmas Toy Store in 2024

I'm really looking forward to our first Christmas together as a family this year, and Georgia's kids are even coming from Australia. We have a plan to spend Christmas Day in her backyard, and use the time to reflect and set our goals for the new year. I'm focused on creating a safe home, and then getting into full-time employment. Youth work is definitely something that I want to get into, because I truly believe that someone positive coming into a young person's life can work wonders.

Sitting here now with my new mindset, and knowing that's happened thanks to the people who donate to the Mission is really humbling. That pure intention to help someone like me, who they don't even know, shows such love and respect, and it's moved mountains for me. It's opened my eyes to see that there's much good in the world. I believe I can achieve whatever I set my mind to, and I want to show others that they can do it too!

Alisha,

**Kaiarahi/AOD Practitioner
Te Pā Pori**

“Denis should be very proud of everything he's achieved since being with us. It hasn't been an easy journey for him, but he's worked really hard. He's also been a great influence on the other manuhiri, and really encouraged and motivated others.

For me personally, it's been a real pleasure to help him find a new home where he and his daughter can start their next chapter!”



“

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”



• Hayden with his son, Jesse-Reign

A Stronger Foundation

With faith, perseverance, and the support of the Mission, Hayden has found stability — and a home he can share with his tamariki.

In 2019, I had fallen into a pretty bad drug addiction. I lost my job and started living between a tent and my car at different beaches around Wellington. Being homeless was my last resort, but I had pushed my family away with all of the drama in my life. I had two sons who were living with their mum in Auckland. It was an ugly time in my life, and I was definitely lost.

After about a year, I Googled 'homeless shelter', and came across the Mission for the first time. I imagined a place for homeless people would be like what you see in the movies. But when I visited for an interview, the staff made me feel very welcome, and when I saw my room I couldn't believe it. That day, after being sceptical about my faith for a long time, I dropped to my knees and thanked God.

Once I moved in, the staff spent time checking in with

me, and that made me feel loved, which was kind of what I needed. It was hard for me to talk about my addiction and family issues, but I started joining the men's group every morning, where we shared what we were all going through. I liked surrounding myself with positive people while I was breaking my drug addiction, and the whole experience was very motivating for me. I didn't want to go back to my old life, and from there I picked myself up.

The next few years were better. I left the Mission and stayed away from drugs, but I still couldn't find my feet, and I ended up coming back for help. I moved into Te Pā Pori on Tory Street and found a full-time job as a scaffolder in Waikanae, where I later became a team leader. It was awesome how much help there was at Te Pā Pori, and whenever I got days off I would join the activities and groups. It was good being around people who had been through similar situations, and knowing that I wasn't the only one having a hard time. Being there gave me a big boost, and I created a stable lifestyle for the first time in years.

All through my time there I was going to heaps of flat viewings, but never getting accepted. Because they do credit checks, and mine's been so bad for the last ten years, I couldn't get anything. I also missed seeing my boys and wanted them near me, but as they couldn't stay at Te Pā Pori with me, my sister agreed they could stay down here in Wellington with her.

Since then, I've been able to build a proper relationship with them, and that has been a blessing. And thankfully, with the Mission's support, in November last year I was also able to move into Te Ō – which is my own rental apartment. When I first saw it, I was overwhelmed. I was so happy, because it'd been six long years since I had somewhere I could call home. Now my kids come and stay with me every weekend and in the school holidays.

I do still have some hard times ahead of me, mainly because in May, after nearly five years, I lost my scaffolding job. I've been to lots of interviews, but construction's pretty slow at the moment, so I'm grateful that the Mission's here helping me get through it all. I've been going to the Social Supermarket on those stressful weeks when I have to pay my bigger bills and wouldn't be able to pay for food. The last couple of Christmases, I've also been invited to the Mission Toy Store. That was a first-time experience for me as a dad, because even though I was working, I couldn't do much for my kids at Christmas. I loved that I could choose my presents for them, and it also made me wish that I could get into a position to do that for them on my own.

The last six years have been a heck of a journey, and the only sense of stability I've had has come from the Mission. It's given me a place to live, helped with food, and let me



691 Families

were provided with food support last Christmas

give presents to my children at Christmas. Personally, I've changed a lot too. I'm back at church, I've been sober for four years, and I'm being a better dad for my kids.

If I could bring together all the people who have helped get to this point in one room, I would do one big thank you speech! I never thought there was help out there for someone like me. Without you, I don't want to imagine where I would be.

Trust in the Lord
with all your heart and lean not
on your own understanding
in all your ways acknowledge him,
and He will make your
paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

“ Personally, I've changed a lot too. I'm back at church, I've been sober for four years, and I'm being a better dad for my kids. ”





• Srebra and Vai (Registered Nurse at Kemp)

Kemp is my Family

After hardship at home in Bulgaria, Srebra says life at Kemp Home & Hospital has given her purpose and joy.

I came to New Zealand in 1999 to start a new life. It wasn't safe for us in my country, Bulgaria. My father was a democrat, so our family were treated as an enemy by the powerful communists.

It was a hard life. My two sons were stolen from me when they were young. Then, when my sister lost her vision in an accident, I left my job and sold my apartment to help her and her teenage children. They were at an important age, so I wanted to make sure they could build a good life for themselves. She eventually recovered 50% of her vision, and my father told me to go somewhere safe where I could start again. After I left, my mother and father were killed.

I have a master's degree in psychology, and worked as an intensive care nurse and social worker, but I couldn't speak English, so I started learning it at Whitireia. I worked as a cleaner and caregiver in a rest home in

Wellington for a while, but some years later I got very sick and went to hospital. After I was discharged I had nowhere to go, so I was put in an emergency hotel for two years. It was getting very difficult for me to take care of myself, and I felt very alone. One day, some staff from Kemp Home & Hospital connected with me. I very much liked them, and I agreed to move in.

I've been here for over three years now, and I know I did not make a mistake moving here. There have been times when I have struggled and needed more attention, and I've received that here. The nurses and staff are good – I know with my professional experience! You can tell they have a deep desire to care for all the rest home residents and hospital patients. And that's very important for people who really need it. Whenever something is wrong they are fast to help, and that stops people from needing more health care.

I really like the approach they take to their care too. I am impressed by how they put the individual person first. This is very important in my opinion, and I appreciate it. One example is how they pay for me to call my sister in Bulgaria once or twice a month. She is my only connection to my past, so it is nice for me to speak with her.

There is lots of good stuff here, we have a library, and I read a lot of books, which is my hobby. We also have a chapel, and twice a week we have services with our

caring chaplain, Brenda. I enjoy speaking with people and doing group activities. Recently, we celebrated the International Day for Older Persons, and we played competitive games. I also like doing the daily quizzes and exercises with our diversional therapist. The staff are always encouraging us to do fun things, to be competitive, and to have purpose. This keeps me feeling young!

We also celebrate very special times, such as Father's and Mother's Day, Easter, and Christmas. We do this as a family, and it gives us a complete life. You can see how much these days mean to everyone who lives here.

I'm glad I survived what I have gone through, and now I feel very happy and confident. I don't feel so alone, because Kemp is my family, and I have motivation each day.

Thank you to Mission donors. This is a good place to support, it has a good purpose, and I am very grateful for my life here.



200

koha meals

will be served on Christmas day
at Whakamaru



• Srebra proudly holding one of her event participation medals

Vai, Registered Nurse Kemp Home & Hospital



"I've known Srebra well for a few years now, and she has opened up more and more since first joining us at Kemp.

She's quite a leader, and she gets involved with lots of different activities and looks out for the other residents. She's always positive and appreciates being here, and it's a pleasure to be able to care for her!"



• Srebra in Kemp Home & Hospital's chapel

The Change You Enabled – July - September 2025



16,603

Meals

provided for manuhiri in our Transitional Housing and at Craig & Gail's Café



1,195

People

supported through our Community Services and Financial Mentoring



1,621

Shoppers

supported through our Social Supermarket



20,380

manuhiri welcomed into Whakamaru



2,226

showers & laundry users at Whakamaru



274

manuhiri presentations at Kua Mākona i Whakamaru (Crisis Café)



Quarterly Newsletter - Christmas 2025 Murray's Message

In recent days, we have welcomed a brand new little life into our whānau. My third grandchild has already won our hearts, and his arrival has filled us with excitement, joy, and jubilation. This is how it should be when a baby is born.

I was reflecting on this when I held him in my arms for the first time. This little man will be loved, cared for, and supported for all of his days. Whilst this doesn't guarantee his future, it does give him the best possible start in life, and ensures he has a stable platform to live his life from.

Sadly, I know this isn't the reality for so many of our tamariki. For many of the manuhiri we work with at the Wellington City Mission, their life challenges can be attributed to childhood trauma, neglect or abuse. It is often these challenging circumstances that define their future life trajectories.

The frequency and severity of child abuse in New Zealand is a cause for national shame, and we all need to be committed to ensuring that this changes.

At the Wellington City Mission, we often help people process what has happened to them, help them make the necessary changes in themselves, and live into the desire they have for life to be better for their own children and their own whānau.

In this edition of On A Mission, you will read the moving and very powerful stories of Denis and Hayden who, despite the adversity they had both faced, have made

changes to their lives and ensured that their children would have better lives than they had experienced for themselves.

We also hear the life story of Srebra who has rebuilt her life after relocating to New Zealand from her home country of Bulgaria. Having faced much tragedy in her life, Srebra has found a place of support and nurture with the wonderful team at Kemp Home and Hospital.

In each of these stories, the Mission has walked alongside people whose lives needed restoration and renewal. The staff and volunteers that work at the Mission do an extraordinary job, but they can only do what they do with the financial support and generosity of our donors.

Thank you for enabling us to do what we do. Even if people's start in life isn't good, or they face severe hardship for whatever reason, with your help, we can support people to live into their best version of themselves.

Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God;

I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

Isaiah 41:10

Ngā manaakitanga – blessings

Murray Edridge -
Wellington City Missioner, He Manu Taupua

FIND US

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