

CHAMPIONSHIP

Christmas edition



The Champion Centre
TAMARIKI TOIORA

The Champion Centre - Building futures for children with special needs

NEWSLETTER | December 2017

A message from the Champion Centre Director - Dr. Susan Foster-Cohen



It's hard to believe that December is already upon us, and that we are well underway with the end of year festivities and are starting to plan for 2018.

Reflecting on the past 12 months, it has been quite a turbulent year, with a new Government and uncertainty over what their priorities might mean for us, and more so our Government funding.

However, Cantabrians appeared to remain steadfast, as we marked 1 year from the devastating Kaikoura earthquake, and 6 years from the deadly earthquake which struck our city. It brings hope and promise to see the CBD starting to flourish once again.

Our valuable team of professionals continues to be the life blood of the Centre, bringing leading edge services to our families. This year we welcomed 6 new part-time members to the team, including a speech therapist, a physiotherapist, three new early intervention educators, and a music specialist. We are also about to farewell three longstanding members of staff who are moving on to well-deserved retirement after a combined total of 59 years of dedicated service to the Champion Centre.

This year, we have been fortunate to appoint a Development Director, to support our commercial aspirations and funding goals. Thanks to the Champion Foundation, who have enabled funding for the role, we have recently appointed Abby Shaw who commenced with us in November. Over the coming months, Abby will be creating a framework to increase our public profile and engage with our supporters, all the while focusing on

opportunities to reduce our operating deficit, and ultimately ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the Centre. If you would like to speak with Abby about what you can do to support the Centre, please contact her on abby.shaw@championcentre.org.nz

It is without a doubt, that we have the most experienced and dedicated team, providing holistic integrated health, education and social services which make the Centre distinctively unique in its offering.

I personally want to thank our team for their unwavering commitment to make a difference, more often than not, going above and beyond what is expected. You are all truly valued.

I hope as you read through our Christmas newsletter, you get a sense of some of the achievements from the past year. We intend to increase our engagement with all our wonderful supporters in 2018, as we further share the story and passion of the Champion Centre.

Make sure we have all your up-to-date contact details so we can ensure you get our correspondence and news. If you have updated your details, please let us know by dropping us a line on office@championcentre.org.nz or by calling the office on 03 383 6867.

Wishing you all a safe and happy festive season.

Susan H. Foster-Cohen

Dr. Susan Foster-Cohen,
Centre Director

Our families

At the heart of the Champion Centre, our families continue to be a great source of strength and encouragement to one another. We are so fortunate to have such wonderful children, parents, and grandparents come through the Centre doors each week, and we hope that they realise how much joy they all bring to the hard-working team.

Once again, the year has seen some great highs for our families, as we celebrated the graduation of another 13 children from our full multi-disciplinary programme for children with complex disabilities, and 18 from our monitoring programme for children born prematurely. All have embarked on the next leg of their education, by transitioning on to, in most instances, mainstream primary schools.

It has not been without some heartache, as there have been personal losses among both our families and staff that remind us how precious life is and how important our relationships with others are.

Thank you to all our families for their ongoing commitment to the Centre and the programmes. As we draw closer to the 'silly season', which can be a stressful time for many, you are all encouraged to take some time out and enjoy spending valuable time with loved ones.

We look forward to seeing all our families in the new year, when we commence at the start of term, on 29th January. The week before we will welcome staff back from holiday for our annual Training Week where we make sure we are up-to-date on best practice, so that we can offer the very best service to our families.



One of our many wonderful families. Cindy and Emma Bloxham are pictured above having fun with Early intervention teacher, Lisa Duthie.

Our supporters

We continue to be overwhelmed by the support of our families and friends.

This year we have had several fundraising ventures, coordinated by our wonderful supporters and the Champion Foundation. The Foundation ran a very successful Art from the Attic event, which you can read more about later in this newsletter. We had one of our mothers organise a brilliant social event and auction, which raised close to \$10,000 and another parent organised for Champion Centre collection boxes to be available at all Christchurch Muffin Break outlets. The grandparents of our children also got involved in supporting our cause with one

grandmother organising a fundraiser in conjunction with her hair salon, and another arranging for a friend to ride a donated scooter from Bluff to Cape Reinga to raise funds. We are also incredibly grateful to the parent who pushed for our advertising appeal to be inserted, at no cost, into The Press whenever they have an unused advertising space available.

Thank you to all who support us through organising fundraising events and providing donations. Your assistance enables us to continue to support infants and children with disabilities, in our community.

Art from the Attic

What started out over a few wines as an idea to fundraise, ended as a night to remember, and one to mark on your calendar as we plan to reignite Art from the Attic, again in 2018.

Amidst a crowd of 120 guests, over 100 donated art works provided the backdrop for an evening of reconnecting and mingling, whilst also sparking healthy competition, as 'punters' battled it out to take home a piece of artwork.

The evening was a great success, with approximately \$35,000 raised by the Champion Foundation, and its supporters. The Foundation, which was set up in 2009, has a purpose to raise capital funds, to support the long-term sustainability of the Champion Centre. Both the Centre and Foundation Trustees were duly delighted with the outcome of the evening, as they continue to work hand in hand to ensure that the Centre and its programmes are accessible for infants and children with disabilities for many years to come.



Local sculptor Leah Fraser-Henderson created a very special piece of artwork especially for the event.

A snapshot of 2017

**40
YEARS**

Earlier this year we reached 40 years of operation – a milestone which we plan to celebrate in 2018, so keep an eye out for details.

**OUR
TEAM**

Our leading-edge team participated in presenting more than 35 presentations to local, national and international audiences and have had three publications in international professional journals.

**12+
EVENTS**

Over a dozen fundraising events took place, of which the Champion Centre was the Charity of Choice benefactor.

\$250K

The Champion Foundation raised over \$250,000 during the financial year to support the longevity of the Champion Centre.

**13
GRADS**

Thirteen children graduated from the multi-disciplinary programme for children with complex disabilities and a further 18 from the monitoring programme for children born prematurely. All moved on to the next stage of their educational journey.

\$150K

Our friends at Independent Fisheries, generously committed to three years of financial support, to a total value of \$150,000.

BOARD

We thanked the Trustees of both Boards at our 2017 AGM. We also recognised the contribution of the outgoing Champion Foundation Chair, Mike Norris and welcomed Celia Barker to the role.

**NEW
GP**

We welcomed a part-time GP to the team, who will provide vital healthcare services for our families to utilise.

KARAKIA

We established our own Karakia, which you can watch on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/TheChampionCentre/videos

Jack's journey



Standing tall with confidence in front of an audience attending the 2017 Annual General Meeting, was former graduate, now 20-year-old Jack McEwen. The young man, who many of the support team fondly remember, shared his story with those in attendance, reflecting on his journey and sharing with us a glimpse of his future.

In 2000 Jack entered the doors of the Champion Centre, as an anxious and cautious three-year-old, diagnosed with Developmental Dyspraxia. This is a condition that affects the gross motor skills which support whole body activity as well as fine motor skills, such as the hand movements required to write, and the mouth and tongue movements to pronounce words clearly. It also affects individuals' capacity to organise their thoughts and intentions and can be a challenge to learning throughout life.

Jack, alongside his parents Pauline and Bruce, would attend the Centre weekly, participating in the multi-disciplinary programmes including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech-language therapy, and early intervention teaching to support cognitive development. Jack also attended the Centre's computer supported learning and music programmes.

In late 2002, Jack started his transition to school, with the support of the Champion Centre's Education Support Worker, Marie Stevenson. Jack reflected on this time of transition and the support that Marie and the Centre provided to make it as smooth as possible. Jack even brought along to the AGM, the book which Marie provided him all those years ago, to help him transition. The book illustrated simple things such as where to hang his blazer and where the bathrooms were located, all to help familiarise Jack with his new surroundings.

Jack did not let his dyspraxia hold him back and his achievements are stunning. Throughout his primary school years, Jack got involved in a diverse range of activities, including hockey, rugby, karate, and fencing. He was a finalist in a speech competition, had a lead role in the school's production, and even dabbled in robotics. Jack showed that he was keen to get involved in a multitude of activities, and was committed to what he set his mind to.

This was recognised in Jack's final year of primary school, when he was awarded an Excellence Award at prizegiving.

While Jack acknowledged in his presentation that he did not find learning easy, he said he absolutely loved his high school years and his dedication to working hard and studying paid off when he earned his NCEA Level 1 through to 3, an accomplishment to be incredibly proud of.

Despite his dyspraxia, Jack has always had a 'knack' for building things, starting off as a child playing with Lego (excellent therapy for hand movements and thinking and planning), and moving on to the complex BIONICLE range. His ability to follow instructions to create complex items provided him with peace, and he was clearly very good at it, because he has now secured a full-time role with local power and electrical firm PDC (Power Distribution & Control) working in the production team making small scale switchboards for commercial and residential usage.

The future looks exciting for Jack, as a young man in a job he thoroughly enjoys. The team at the Champion Centre, are incredibly proud of what Jack has gone on to accomplish, since coming through the programmes. In signing off, at the AGM, Jack closed by sharing:

My life would be drastically different without the help, guidance and support I received at an early age from the Champion Centre. I was one of the lucky ones that got referred to the centre... I hope I have done you proud.

Yes, Jack, you certainly have! We are so very proud of what you have achieved and the young man you have become. Thank you for sharing your story, and we wish you every success for the future.

Supporting our cause

Through your generosity, we can continue to provide our multi-disciplinary early intervention services, to infants and children with disabilities.

Contact us to find out how you can donate and support the services at the Champion Centre: PH (03) 383 6867, email office@championcentre.org.nz, or visit our website www.championcentre.org.nz