

# Connect Tūhono

Making a difference together



## A place to feel safe again

When eight-year-old Leo\* began withdrawing at school, his teacher noticed the small changes first. He stopped joining in at playtime. He became easily overwhelmed and often complained of tummy aches before class.

At home, things felt unsettled too. A relationship breakdown, a house move, and ongoing financial pressure had left Leo's mum, Cath\*, feeling stretched and exhausted. She could see her son was struggling, and worried he was carrying big feelings he did not yet have the words for.

Through his school, Leo was referred to Mana Ake, where he and his mum were supported by a Family Works social worker. From the very beginning, the

focus was on whakawhanaungatanga, building trust, connection, and a sense of safety for both of them.

Using gentle, child-led play, drawing, and storytelling, Leo was supported to share what felt hard and to understand how worries can show up in his body. He learnt simple tools to help calm himself when things felt overwhelming, both at school and at home.

Alongside this, Cath was supported too. She was given space to be heard, reassurance about her strengths as a parent, and practical guidance drawn from the Tuning in to Kids programme™.

Together, they explored small changes to routines and daily life that could bring more predictability and calm. *Continued over page ----->*

Enliven Familyworks Āwhina Mai



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Our social worker continued to work at Leo's pace, helping him build confidence through play, conversation, and small successes. Leo learnt that his feelings were valid, and that big emotions do not last forever. He practiced asking for help, using calming tools, and recognising when his body needed a break.

Cath noticed the changes at home first. Even when days were still hard, she felt more confident responding to Leo's emotions with calm and empathy. She began to trust her instincts again, knowing she had the tools to support her son through challenging moments.

The pressure she had been carrying felt lighter, because she was no longer facing it alone. The support also strengthened the connection between home and school. Leo's teacher was able to understand what helped him feel settled, and simple strategies were put in place to support him during the school day.

With steady support around him, Leo started to feel more confident. He joined in more, rediscovered his love of learning, and rebuilt friendships. When children and whānau are supported, they can face challenges with hope and move forward together.

*Help families start school strong!*

Because starting school well can shape a lifetime.

**DONATE** ♥

Together, we're helping children feel safe, and supporting families to thrive. Your gift makes all the difference.



## New Year Greetings

As we step into a new year, we hope you have enjoyed a safe and happy summer, with time to rest, recharge, and reconnect with the people and places that matter most.

Over the Christmas period, your generosity made a genuine difference. Our Christmas Appeal raised \$17,100 to support essential services for tamariki/children, rangathi/young people, whānau/families, and kaumātua/older people. These funds help ensure our teams can continue walking alongside people with care, consistency, and compassion.

Our Christmas Giving Programme brought together schools, parishes, community groups, businesses, and many generous individuals, all united by a shared commitment to caring for others. Through this collective effort, gifts were shared with people and families who were navigating a particularly challenging time.

For many, these gifts meant more than practical support. They were a reminder that they are not alone, and that their community is thinking of them and standing alongside them. Thank you to everyone who donated, gifted, organised, and helped make this possible.

As we look ahead, we continue to see the effects of rising living costs, housing pressure, and family stress. More people are reaching out for support, and your ongoing generosity and support helps ensure that care remains available, steady, and responsive.

We move into the year guided by the belief that small, everyday acts of kindness can create real change. Thank you for standing with us and for continuing to show compassion, care, and connection.

Barry Helem & Kim Manahi  
Co-CEOs / Ngā Tumu  
Whakarāe



## Nelson's Wellbeing Steps

During Mental Health Awareness Week, our Nelson team joined the Step Towards Each Other campaign, using creativity to spark conversations about mental health and wellbeing.

The office foyer was transformed into a shared art space, with shoes donated by staff and clients and a table filled with paints and pens. Throughout the week, staff and clients paused, sat side by side, and decorated a shoe in their own way.

Some moments were quiet and reflective. Others sparked laughter, stories, and meaningful kōrero. As the shoes took shape, the space became a place to slow down, connect, and check in with one another.

Leaving the shoes on display meant the conversation continued beyond the activity itself.



The growing collection became a visible reminder of the importance of stepping towards each other and creating spaces where people feel safe and supported.

The decorated shoes will be displayed in Nelson before coming together in a vibrant art installation on the Cathedral Steps, showing how small creative acts can strengthen connection and wellbeing.

**Connection starts with noticing and reaching out, and if you know someone who could benefit from support, have a chat with our team.**  
Phone 0800 477 874 or email [ps@psusi.org.nz](mailto:ps@psusi.org.nz)



## A warm thank you for our Christchurch volunteers

Aspiring Law recently hosted a special morning tea to thank our wonderful Christchurch volunteers, who give their time to support our services and the people we walk alongside.

The team arrived with homemade food and open hearts, creating a welcoming space where people could relax, connect, and enjoy coming together. There was plenty of conversation, laughter, and story sharing, with people swapping experiences, interests, and reflections on what volunteering means to them.

Our CEOs took the opportunity to thank everyone for the many hours they give, and for the vital role they play in supporting our communities. We are incredibly grateful to Aspiring Law for their thoughtfulness and time in making this moment possible.

**More than 200 volunteers gifted their time to support our work in 2025, contributing over 25,000 hours of community volunteering. Thank you to each and every volunteer, your contribution truly makes a difference!**





For many, these gifts brought more than joy. They offered comfort, dignity, and reassurance during a time of year that can feel especially hard. Behind every gift was a story of kindness.

Parishes, schools, businesses, community groups, and individuals came together to donate, organise, wrap, and deliver gifts with care and respect. This collective effort ensured support reached people across our communities, reminding them they are not alone.

## A Community That Shows Up

Each year, our community shows up with generosity and care, making sure families and individuals who are doing it tough are not forgotten at Christmas.

Through our Christmas Giving programme, 116 thoughtful and meaningful gifts were shared with families and individuals across the Upper South Island. These were not just presents, they were items chosen with care and understanding. Young people received essential items that supported their everyday needs, children were delighted with games and toys to spark joy and play, and older people were gifted Christmas treats such as shortbread and chocolates.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed, including **Lincoln United, Cashmere, The Village Ilam, and St Ninian's parish, Papanui Rotary, staff from the Ministry of Education, Duncan Cotterill, 2degrees, St Andrew's College, and Rangi Ruru,** along with many generous individuals who quietly gave what they could. Thank you for showing up for our community!



## Knitted with Kindness

We were deeply moved when Christchurch Women's hospital reached out for blankets and clothes for babies and families in need. Our community responded quickly, donating handmade items created with care and kindness.

When we delivered the gifts, a nurse named Mary shared how meaningful these donations are. Tiny knitted teddies are given to new mums, children in hospital, and parents grieving the loss of a baby, sometimes accompanying a baby on their final journey. Hearing this stayed with us.

Inspired, our staff began knitting teddies of their own. Over the months, we returned to the hospital with more handmade gifts, each one carrying comfort, love, and connection during some of life's most difficult moments.

Thank you to everyone who helped turn a simple act of kindness into something truly meaningful.



## A heartfelt farewell to Laurie Lee

After 19 years at the Riccarton Tōtara Club, Laurie has farewelled a place and a community she helped shape with care, steadiness, and heart.

Over the years, Laurie supported club members, volunteers, and colleagues through some of the most challenging moments our communities have faced, including the Canterbury earthquakes, the Covid-19 lockdowns, and the Christchurch mosque attacks. Whether it was ensuring people were safely home, checking in with members each day, or helping organise supplies for those who needed extra support, Laurie was there, quietly and consistently.

What kept her at Tōtara Club for so long was the people. Laurie speaks warmly of the club members, their life stories, and the joy of creating a place where people could relax, feel at ease, have a laugh, and build friendships. She has always described Tōtara Club as a space with no pressure, just connection, comfort, and a sense of belonging.

Laurie and the team worked hard to make our Riccarton Enliven Centre as welcoming and homely as possible, and that feeling has meant a great deal to everyone who has walked through the doors.

We thank Laurie for her dedication, compassion, and the many small, meaningful moments that added up to nearly two decades of care. Her legacy will continue in the relationships she nurtured and the calm, welcoming culture she helped create at Tōtara Club. All the best with your retirement Laurie!



## Creating Change that lasts!

Change Champions are a special community of people who choose to stand alongside local whānau every month, helping create positive change, day by day.

By giving regularly, you help make sure support is there not only during moments of crisis, but in the everyday moments too, when steady care, encouragement, and connection make all the difference.

When you become a Change Champion, you are investing in long-term change right here in our community.

Scan the QR code to learn more, or if you would like to have a chat about becoming a Change Champion, we would love to hear from you.

Rae Thomas

Phone: 0800 477 874 or 03 363 8209

Email: [raet@psusi.org.nz](mailto:raet@psusi.org.nz)



# YES! I can help

Your donation supports vulnerable children, families/whānau, and older people, enabling them to thrive.



\$ 30

Provides printed resources to support parents in nurturing resilient children/tamariki.

\$ 50

Covers a meal and transport for an older person to attend an Enliven programme.

\$ 99

Provides critical support from a social worker for a child experiencing anxiety and or trauma.

\$

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Signature

**Post this form to:** Presbyterian Support, Freepost 60373, PO Box 13171, Christchurch 8141. We will email your receipt if you have supplied an email address, otherwise you will be sent it in the post.

Give monthly or leave a gift in your will to help your community thrive for years to come. Tick for more information or contact Rae Thomas.



Thank you for your support, we couldn't do it without YOU!



## Ways to give

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## Meet Rae!

Our amazing Donor and Community Relations guru. She loves connecting with our wonderful supporters and making sure your generosity creates real, positive change in our community.

If you ever have a question about your donation, Rae is only a call or email away, and is always happy to help.

**Phone:** 0800 477 874

**Mobile:** 021 828 671

**Email:** [Raet@psusi.org.nz](mailto:Raet@psusi.org.nz)

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