

Connect Tūhono

Making a difference together



“I just wanted my daughter back.”

Jo* remembers finding her 15-year-old daughter Aria* sitting on the bathroom floor at 2am. Aria was crying, exhausted and telling her mum she couldn't face another day.

“I sat beside her and held her. I remember thinking, I don't know how to make this better. I don't know how to keep my daughter safe.”
Jo shared.

Two years earlier, Aria's parents had separated. The family moved house, she changed schools and friendships she had relied on disappeared. Then came cruel comments at school and online.

Gradually, Aria stopped being Aria. She gave up netball. Her bedroom curtains stayed closed. School became a daily battle, and she stopped joining the

family for dinner. Her younger sister noticed too. She learnt to keep the television down and stopped knocking on Aria's door. The whole family had begun tiptoeing around her sadness.

“I missed her, even though she was right there.”

When Jo reached out to Family Works, she didn't know what her family needed. She just knew they couldn't keep going like this.

Their Family Works psychologist Nickie* started by listening. There was no pressure for Aria to tell her whole story. Slowly, they built trust. Jo was supported too, learning more about depression and how to stay connected when Aria withdrew.

“I'd been trying so hard to fix everything. I learnt that sometimes Aria didn't need me to fix it. She needed me beside her.” Continued over page >

Enliven Familyworks Āwhina Mai

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difficult times find the support
and strength to move forward.



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Aria learnt to recognise when her thoughts were spiralling, ways to manage overwhelming emotions, and how to put words around feelings she had been carrying alone.

Together, Aria and Jo worked towards small goals. Opening the curtains. Eating dinner together. A short walk outside. Messaging a friend. Returning to school for a morning. Those small steps became bigger ones. Today, Aria is back at school regularly, seeing friends and playing netball again.

But for Jo, the biggest change is at home. *“Aria annoys her little sis again,”* she laughs. *“They argue over the remote and steal food off each other’s plates. Last week I heard them laughing upstairs and I just stood in the hallway listening.”*

“For so long, our home felt like it was holding its breath. Now there’s music coming from Aria’s room. I have my daughter back, and her little sis has her big sister back too.”



Depression can show up as withdrawal, irritability, changes in sleep, or losing interest in things they once enjoyed. If something doesn’t feel right, check in. Listen without judgement, keep the connection open and remind them they don’t have to face it alone. If you’re concerned, reach out to a GP, counsellor or mental health professional. You don’t need to wait for a crisis to ask for help.

Spring Greetings

As we welcome spring, there’s a sense of new energy in the air. Longer days, a little more sunshine, and a chance to look forward to the months ahead.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who supported our Winter Appeal. Together, you helped raise more than \$8,000 for our services across the Upper South Island.

Behind that number are real people and whānau. Your generosity helps our teams walk alongside children, young people and families through challenging times, providing practical support, counselling, guidance and connection when it’s needed most.

September is Wills Month, a timely reminder to think about the people and causes that matter to us. Leaving a gift in your Will, no matter the size, is one way to help ensure support is there for future generations.

September also brings Te Wiki o te Reo Māori, when our teams will come together for our annual cultural challenge, an opportunity to learn, have some fun and strengthen our connections with one another.

Throughout this edition of Connect, you’ll find stories of people showing up for one another, from years of dedicated service to everyday moments of kindness across our regions.

To our donors, volunteers, supporters, staff and wider whānau, thank you for being part of it. Together, you help create communities where people feel valued, connected and supported.

Ngā mihi,

Barry Helem & Kim Manahi
Co-CEO’s/ Ngā Tumu Whakarae



Growing connections at Tōtara

There's been plenty of warmth, laughter and connection at our Enliven Tōtara Club in Blenheim/Waiharakeke.

Recently, members enjoyed a trip to a local orchard, where apples were generously offered to Tōtara free of charge. There was fresh air, good company and plenty of picking, with members taking apples home and the rest cooked and frozen for delicious apple crumbles at winter lunches.

A new connection is bringing a different kind of joy. Young māmā and their pēpē from the local Multicultural Centre have begun joining members for mornings of music, play and conversation. Many of the mums don't have grandparents or wider whānau nearby, making these shared mornings particularly special.

There are little hands to hold, stories to share and plenty of smiles around the room. It's whakawhanaungatanga (building relationships and connection) in action, and a lovely reflection of the spirit of Enliven, where people of all ages can feel welcomed, valued and connected to their community.



A journey that goes both ways

Sometimes, the impact of mentoring goes both ways.

For Jack*, becoming a Family Works Youth Mentor was about supporting a young person, but it also became an important part of his own journey.

Through the mentoring programme, Jack says he gained confidence and learned the value of patience, communication and building trust. During a difficult time in his own life, being a mentor gave him a sense of purpose and a positive connection with his community.

"I'm very grateful I had the chance to be part of his journey. It was a really meaningful experience for me."



A few hours of your time can make a meaningful difference.

Interested in volunteering?

We'd love to hear from you.

Contact us today, ps@psusi@org.nz.

* Names and some imagery have been changed to protect people's privacy.

Ready, set, grow

We believe young people can achieve great things. With the right support and encouragement, they can build confidence in everyday skills like cooking, personal care and trying new things.

In Ashburton, our team wanted to understand what would make a real difference for local young people and their families. So they started by asking the community one simple question, what would help?



Parents and caregivers shared what their children needed and what would make learning feel fun and achievable. From these conversations, a school holiday programme began to take shape, building on what young people already bring, while giving them space to grow.

With support from the community, the programme came to life. Local businesses donated products, first aid kits, and food for cooking sessions, so children could keep practicing at home.

The programme focused on four key areas, Life Hacks, Maintenance, Food, and Be Active.

Children planted vegetables, learned basic bike skills, and explored nature. They built confidence in caring for themselves, preparing simple meals, and creating healthy lunchboxes. They also discovered low and no cost ways to stay active in their community.



Parents shared just how much it meant for their families. One parent said that after a really challenging time, seeing their children come home “lit up” and proudly showing what they had made felt incredibly special. Others spoke about their children’s excitement to return each day, sharing new skills with friends and whānau, and feeling more confident to try new things. Each part of the programme built on existing strengths, helping young people feel capable and confident.

Thank you to the local businesses who made this possible. Together, this support is helping children grow in confidence, independence, and practical skills they can use in everyday life.



Farewell Libby, 'Mrs Tōtara'

For 24 years, Libby has been at the heart of Enliven Marlborough bringing laughter and a whole lot of aroha to her mahi.

Fondly described as "Mrs Tōtara", Libby has cared deeply for Tōtara members, their whānau, volunteers and her work whānau. Over more than two decades, she has helped create a place where people feel welcomed, valued and genuinely seen.

For Libby, the heart of the job has always been simple: making sure people go home after a day at Tōtara with a smile, knowing someone has taken the time to really see them, listen to them and enjoy their company.

So, when the time came to celebrate Libby's retirement, there were plenty of people who wanted to be there. Around 40 past and present staff, volunteers and whānau gathered for an afternoon of shared kai, stories, reminiscing and plenty of laughter.

Ngā mihi nui, Libby. After so many years of caring for others, we hope retirement brings plenty of good times, laughter and aroha your way.

Help us make a difference in the lives of others, visit psuppersouth.org.nz to learn more about our job and volunteer vacancies.



Challenge Accepted!

Our teams have been finding their own ways to connect, celebrate and learn together.

For Matariki, this meant shared kai, kōrero, activities and time spent together.

While celebrations looked a little different from place to place, they were all grounded in the same spirit of reflection, connection, remembrance and looking ahead with hope.

Next up is Te Wiki o te Reo Māori (Māori Language Week), 14–20 September, and for the second year running, we're bringing a little friendly competition into the celebrations with our PSUSI cultural challenge!

Our teams from across the Upper South are invited to come together to showcase their creativity through learning and performing a waiata, poem, haka or toi Māori. Each group will film their performance and send it to our PSUSI judging panel.

After the fun of our first challenge last year, we're looking forward to seeing what our teams bring in 2026. There'll be plenty of singing, movement and, we suspect, a few laughs along the way!

The winning team will receive our special cultural challenge trophy and the all-important bragging rights, proudly holding onto the trophy for the year before passing it on to our next champions.

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