

News

Helping Canterbury kids reach their

A myriad of groups help keep our community moving. Reporter **Bea Gooding** speaks to the Graeme Dingle Foundation Canterbury manager Chris Davis about how its programmes help children build resilience and important life skills

Could you tell me about the Graeme Dingle Foundation?

Graeme Dingle Foundation Canterbury has been supporting young people in our community through the delivery of positive child and youth development programmes since 2002. We work with communities, predominantly in areas with high levels of social deprivation, to provide life-changing opportunities for young people. To date, we have delivered our programmes to 33,042 young people across Canterbury.

Our vision is to empower our young people by providing them with the tools to overcome any obstacles that may come their way. Our programmes are currently benefitting over 3700 young people every week in 22 schools across Canterbury



EMPOWERING YOUNG: Chris Davis of the Graeme Dingle Foundation is providing children with tools to overcome obstacles. PHOTO: GEOFF SLOAN

of which 2592 students are in Christchurch specifically. These programmes build lifelong skills, positive relationships and qualities such as integrity, respect and resilience that will last the students a lifetime.

What kind of programmes are available?

Graeme Dingle Foundation

Canterbury runs three programmes, Kiwi Can, Stars and Project K. Kiwi Can is the primary school programme. The students attend a Kiwi Can session each week and learn core values and life skills through games and activities. Stars is a year 9 peer mentoring programme. Year 12 and year

13 students are trained to run mentoring classes once a week for year 9s. The students learn about bullying, social media, positive relationships, teamwork and respecting each other. Project K is a 21-day wilderness expedition for year 10 students. The students are taken 200 km away from school into the Southern Alps

and then hike, camp and cycle their way back to school. Project K is a journey of self-discovery.

I understand the programme has experienced an increased demand recently. Why has this been the case?

The last few years have been very difficult for young people in Christchurch, more so than in other parts of Aotearoa. The psychosocial impacts of the earthquakes are still lingering, with parts of East Christchurch remaining uninhabitable due to the earthquake-ravaged "red zone."

More recently, these same young people have had to deal with the horror forced upon them by an act of terrorism, right on their doorstep. Now they are faced with Covid-19, with the "new normal" that this brings and with likely job losses impacting their home lives – the mental health and well-being of these families may be negatively impacted, adversely affecting many young people across these communities.

Census 2018 statistics across the communities we work in paint a sobering picture, with nearly a quarter of all school leavers not gaining qualifications and a NEET rate (Not in Employment, Education and/or Training) of above 15 per cent.



St John

Christchurch

STORES

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full potential

What kind of issues have been impacting school children recently? And how has the programme helped them overcome these barriers?

School principals ask for the Graeme Dingle Foundation programmes to come into their schools because we provide positive youth development that complements and extends the positive behaviour for learning work that schools are already doing for their students.

“Many of [our] students lack the privilege of being immersed in and surrounded by positive role models in their life. The Kiwi Can programme has provided the opportunity for our kids to learn, practice and demonstrate the implementation of values into their everyday actions and behaviours. I can confidentially say that the programme will undoubtedly have long term benefits for our students and their ability to positively contribute to our community.” – **Janeane Reid, principal of Te Waka Unua School.**

What are the common barriers that hold children back from reaching their full potential in life?

It is always so important to

remember that not all childhoods are created equal. Some kids have a tough start and it can hold them back. Big factors are poverty, family instability with lots of moving house and changing schools, lack of good housing and hunger. Our goal as an organisation is to help those kids to know that, no matter what their start is in life, what they have inside is strong enough to overcome any obstacle.

Why is an organisation like this important for Canterbury kids?

I think a school principal can answer this better than I can:

“Kiwi Can has a positive impact on the students at Bamford School. Through the programme, senior students have become more confident and have developed the ability to take risks in front of their peers without being embarrassed. Furthermore, they have learnt valuable lessons about resilience, honesty, integrity and leadership through fun and engaging activities.” – **Shona Hewlett, principal of Ngutuawa School.**

What advice would you give parents and educators to instil positivity, resilience and confidence in kids, and why?

The teachers and principals



BUILDING RESILIENCE: Demand for programmes at the Graeme Dingle Foundation is soaring, with many more schools coming on board in recent weeks.

PHOTO: GEOFF SLOAN

we meet and work with are fantastic and are all working really hard on behalf of Canterbury’s youth.

Graeme Dingle Foundation Canterbury’s role is to provide a set time each week where the students can really focus on learning about respect, positive relationships, resilience and

integrity.

These positive values are of course also being learned about during regular class time and at home.

Our foundation’s role is to focus strongly on these topics in a whole-class format every week. The students get a chance to play games that model positive

behaviours and to carefully consider and discuss their values and actions.

Our classes are a chance to talk about values regularly with young people and our school leaders model good values and behaviours.

Kids become what they see and hear.

POWER VINYASA YOGA

Many people find Apollo’s Power Vinyasa practice to be effective in relieving and preventing back pain and tension-related types of pain.

yoga pose of the month



STANDING FORWARD BEND

Standing forward bend is a great counter pose to relieve tightness in the back of your body caused by running, cycling, sitting and so forth and relieves compression and pain in your back. It is also a good pose to relax tension from your shoulders, neck and jaw. Standing forward bend creates a relaxed state of mind.

- Stand with your feet parallel at hip width. Evenly spread your weight through the length and breadth of your feet.
- Bend your knees a little. Fold your upper body down towards the floor from your hips. Avoid rounding your back as much as possible.
- Do not bounce or try to force your body to bend deeply. Relax gently and gradually into greater depth.
- Set the palms of your hands at the back of your Achilles tendons or calves. Draw your elbows towards one another behind your legs.
- Draw your shoulder blades away from your ears. Relax your neck and allow your head to hang free.
- As you progress, shift the weight of your hips forward and stack your hips over your ankles. Press the backs of your thighs towards the back of your room.
- Relax your jaw and soften the features of your face.
- Breathe calmly through your nose for 5-10 breaths then slowly return to standing on an inhale.



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