



Aspiehelp / The Aspire Trust November 2016 Newsletter

Edited by Hazel Shanks

In this newsletter: Aspiehelp Holiday hours, Leith and Julie's trip to Auckland, Sausage Sizzle fundraisers for later this month, our regular "In our office", and Leith reviews "The Events".

Leith and Julie trip to Auckland

Leith and Julie had a great trip to Auckland to talk to various people, including attending a Te Pou meeting on Autism workforce development guidelines, and discussing the formation of an Autism DPO with Gabrielle Hogg.

They also had a chance to talk with Olivia's parents, Greg and Ann (see photo), and Francis Cooper, an ex-Aspiehelp member who is now doing well in Auckland.

It was a productive and successful trip, which left our two Counsellors exhausted but happy.



From left: Julie, Leith, Greg Stacy, and Ann Martin-Stacy

Aspiehelp Holiday hours for 2016-17 holidays

Aspiehelp is taking a break over the summer holiday period. Our last day in the office will be 15th of December 2016, and we reopen on Tuesday 17th January 2017.

Our last Social Night for the year will be the 7th of December. There will be no Aspiehelp Social evening on the 21st of December nor on the 4th of January. The first social night of the New Year will be the 18th of January.

We understand that holidays can be stressful, with crowds, repetitive music, bright lights, and family gatherings. If you would like support over the holidays, please talk to us as soon as possible, and understand that we need some time off too!

Sausage Sizzle BBQs for November and December

We have more Sausage Sizzles planned for later this month (and early next). We will be holding our BBQ fundraisers on Sunday 27th November & Sunday 4th of December, at Mitre 10 Beckenham.

For **\$2.50**, we provide a sausage with bread, tomato sauce, mustard, and fried onion. If you're in the area, please stop past and have one.

Our high quality sausages are provided by Fresh Meats Barrington.

Our sausage sizzles are run by volunteers who donate their time and effort.



Francis, an Aspiehelp member, helps run our sausage sizzle fundraisers.

In Our Office

We have had a very busy month in the office, seeing clients. Women's has been going strong, with a lively and supportive atmosphere.

We attended a NGO Expo at Hillmorton. There were a range of different organisations there to show the mental health support services available in the community, to those who work at Hillmorton. It happened as part of Mental Health Awareness week. We met many other charities and NGO groups in Christchurch, and made a lot of new contacts, opening up future opportunities to collaborate with others.

Te Pou o Whakaari Nui is a Disability Workforce Standards Authority allied to the Department of Health. Julie & Leith were welcomed to the Auckland meeting regarding a proposed template of standards to be required of people working as support workers in the autism sector.

We feel the ideas put forward did include our valuable input (regarding the training of the disability workforce), which was much appreciated by the project manager of Te Pou, and are happy with the overall outcome.

Levels proposed begin Essential -> Capable -> Enhanced -> Leadership. 1/4 of the attendees were on the Autism Spectrum to live "lived experience opinions. We were listened to respectfully and felt a uniform goodwill and purpose from the group.



Our staff, clockwise from top left: Leith, Olivia, Julie, and Hazel

Social evenings

Our regular social evenings are on the first and the third Wednesday of the month, at a venue near Church Corner at 7:30pm. (Please contact Leith for the exact location).

We have board games, hot drinks and biscuits, and a selection of books from the Aspiehelp library available every meeting.

The next two meetings are on the 2nd (following our AGM) and the 16th of November.

You are welcome to attend.

(New members should contact Leith or Julie first.)

Women's group

Our Aspiehelp women's group meets fortnightly on Tuesdays at 2pm.

A get-together for autistic-spectrum women and women living with aspie family.

The next two meetings are the 8th and 22nd of November.

Please contact us if you're interested in attending.

Our Patron is Stephen Mark Shore, PhD.

The Aspire Trust, Inc is a registered Charitable Trust. Charities Services registration number is CC46192.

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“The Events” @ Court Theatre - The Forge, 29 October-12 November 2016

Review by Leith McMurray, 1/11/16

I was given a free ticket to watch this play on 31st October. I gave up going to the Court Theatre a year or so ago because it can be extremely noisy, to the point where (for me) the sensory overload is unbearable, however this play sounded interesting and asperger-related.

There are two actors, Alison Bruce and Arlo Gibson. Alison is a very experienced actor and Arlo, although younger, also has a lot of experience. The writer of the play is David Greig, from the UK. Music is by John Browne.



The Events: How do we make sense of the senseless?

The setting is a community choir rehearsal, conducted by “Claire”, a lesbian cleric with relationship issues, who gradually descends into madness and an unhealthy obsession with a young man (“the boy”) who appears at one of the choir’s rehearsals. Arlo also plays other parts (which are not immediately obvious), such as Claire’s partner, a politician, a business man and a psychiatrist. The character of “the boy” is a composite imagining of the young men who commit massacres/random killings, that are increasingly familiar to us.

These (what I call “lost boys”) are often identified as being on the Autism Spectrum, either definitely or probably and we see some similarly demoralised and hope-less people at Aspiehelp. So many of us are bullied and abused in so many different ways in our youth that our adulthood, already affected by delayed emotional development, becomes a minefield where it is easy to give up and drift aimlessly with no visible light at the end of the tunnel.

I felt very cynical and bored to begin with — so much activity as Alison Bruce tried to grasp our attention by much movement, spitting out her lines so fast I often missed the words- and generally rather reminiscent of a fireworks display — “look at me! see how clever I am with my dazzling pyrotechnics!”. (I said I was cynical.) “The boy” was pretty well done, I recognised him. I was surprised when he metamorphosed into other characters, all done very well.

Somehow the story drew me in and I began wondering how we rescue these sad souls and equip them for a life they will value and find meaning in. This occupied me extremely while also following the story. The choir made interesting interjections and some beautiful musical bits and pieces, with Sue Densem’s gorgeous soprano soaring over the top of all the other voices.

The forum which followed the play seemed to focus on technique and whether the story was “fantasy” or “based on real life”. I said that I work with people like “the boy” and am still searching for how such lives without real meaning can be saved. I seemed that nobody, least of all the actors, saw this as at all relevant. They were looking for praise, not social commentary.

I left the theatre feeling that this production, although at times incandescent, was really a hollow thing — “full of sound and fury, signifying nothing”. I wished I had left before the forum as I felt Alison Bruce did not relate to what I saw as the real message (or did not even recognise it), and saw the play as more of a vehicle to show off her own versatility and awesomeness. Maybe if she had not been so energetic, as there is clearly more than one way to play this character.. the underlying message might have been stronger.

Oh, and there was one terrifying moment where the most unholy racket almost destroyed the sound system, and me with it. I’m not sure whether to recommend this play or not!