



The Hon. Dr. Nick Smith launches Our Place

Welcome to our Place

An exciting new stream restoration project, Our Place, was officially opened on 8 November by The Hon. Dr Nick Smith, Minister of the Environment. The project has been running since June and works with at-risk youth to restore streamside margins along Cranwell Park and Falls Park in Henderson.

Participants take part in a variety of on-site workshops including eco-sourcing native seeds, raising seedlings and exploring the methodologies behind restoration planting schemes, all of which provide them with practical skills in environmental restoration, says Laura Armstrong, Community Education Coordinator, Henderson Creek.

"These sessions allow us to invest significant time with the youth involved and gives them an opportunity to practise co-operation, collaboration and responsibility to achieve environmental results," she says.

Community Waitakere has secured funding for Our Place for two years from the Ministry for the Environment's Community Environment Fund. At the opening the Minister was full of praise for Project Twin Streams, which he says has created "an amazing resource for local communities."

"You wouldn't normally associate the urban environment with such a vista, so it's a testament to the huge number of local people who are behind the project," he said.

Dr Smith was also impressed with the way Our Place provides young people with a framework to take positive action for the environment. "We applaud initiatives such as Our Place that use a creative approach to empower young people with knowledge, skills and new opportunities to engage. These initiatives are vitally important as we look to the future health of our waterways," he says.

Laura agrees the opportunity to connect youth with the environment can have long-term spin-offs. "Young people are the greatest influencers of their peers and are our future decision-makers so their direct involvement will have longer and wider reaching benefits," she says.

Our Place provides an opportunity for Project Twin Streams Henderson Creek to build on its relationship with Child Youth and Family (Waitakere) and ZEAL West Auckland. James Harris, Youth Worker at ZEAL, says he has already seen positive changes as a result. "The young people we work with treat ZEAL with respect, but some were responsible for vandalism in our local area. Our involvement with Our Place has allowed us to extend that respect and sense of care and ownership into the local natural environment which is fantastic," he says.

A steering group with involvement from local mana whenua Te Kawerau a Maki, Auckland Council, Community Group Te Korowai and local youth has been established. Since the project started, 1,000 eco-sourced seeds have been sown, hundreds of seedlings have been potted and 745 native seedlings have been planted.

Winners Announced

Art and the environment were united again at the 2011 Waitakere Trust Art Awards, which opened at Corban Estate Arts Centre on 17 November. Arts Coordinator Mandy Patmore received 52 entries in the Project Twin Streams category which called for artists to research and interpret the theme, 'Flowing Forward – Streams of the Future'.

In the Painting category the winners were: first Tony Brown, *Swims On*; second Jago Neal, *Opanuku Part 1*; and third Stephen Smith, *Undercurrent*.

In the Sculpture category Donna Sarten came first with *Pushing On* (metal, plastic, photography); Bernie Harfleet, second, with *A Metaphor* ladder in rimu, kauri and wax; and Rosie Alderson came third with her *Flow* mosaic.

"It was great to see how many ways a message could be interpreted," said Mandy. "Painting winner Tony Brown used beautiful imagery which portrayed a father and son swimming in the stream, while sculpture winner Donna Sarten took an old trolley from the stream and brought it to life with woven imagery of the old Corban family swimming hole."

The judges were so impressed with the standard of entries they decided to add some merit awards. In the Painting category these went to Sacha Kronfeld (*Birdsong*) and Lynette McKinstrie (*Future Custodians*). Sculpture merits were given to Trevor Pollard for his *Confused Griselinia Root* and to Karen Kennedy for her *Inanga*, *Banded Kokopu* and *Crans Bullies* porcelain and glass sculpture.

Art Awards Gallery: www.tiny.cc/2a57a



Wirihana Wetland



A stormwater drain painting



Agape Trust birdfeeder sculpture

An Urban Gem

Tucked away amongst houses, where Glen Eden meets Titirangi, lies one of Auckland's hidden treasures - the Wirihana Wetland.

Wetlands are among the most threatened ecosystems in New Zealand and are rarely found in an urban environment, so it is only right this ecological gem is being given the treatment it deserves.

This year over 2,000 natives have been planted there by pupils from Glen Eden Intermediate, local residents and Vision West horticultural students. This work was overseen by Alanah Mullin, Project Twin Streams Glen Eden stream ranger.

Alanah spent many hours door-knocking, alerting residents to the fact they have something exceptionally special over their back fence. "I've been trying to connect with the people who will be the long-term guardians of the wetland," she says. "We are gaining momentum each season and slowly but surely we're connecting residents to this special place."

It is estimated that less than 10 per cent of New Zealand's original wetlands remain and in Auckland the statistics are even grimmer. Much of the isthmus once boasted wetlands brimming with cabbage trees, flax, weka and bittern, but today this important habitat makes up less than 0.5 per cent of the region's land cover. Most have been drained to make way for urban development.

Wetlands are described as kidneys, or giant sponges, slowing the flow of water off the land and filtering out pollutants. They're also an important habitat for native plants such as kahikatea, swamp maire, cabbage trees and sedges; as well as native freshwater fish, invertebrates, frogs and birds.

The Year that Was

As 2011 draws to a close, Project Twin Streams' community coordinators look back on the year and share a few highlights.

For Rata Gordon, Opanuku community coordinator, the standout project was the installation of two pou at Te Maara Oranga, the Maori medicinal garden on the banks of the Opanuku Stream.

The pou, Haumie tike tike and Rongo-Ma-Tane, were created by a group of Maori language students from Henderson High School and are the result of a longstanding collaboration between the school and Project Twin Streams. "The transformation of their adopted area of the stream has brought to life indigenous stories and traditions and has also fostered a deep sense of ownership and connection with place," says Rata.

The work of another group of students was the highlight for Angelique Richards, Oratia community coordinator. Students from Bruce McLaren Intermediate came up with a design which they painted around stormwater drains near the school, (image above). "It has been a great engaging tool, to talk more about stormwater, especially about car washing activities and how that soapy water goes straight down into the very streams we care for and look after," says Angelique.

Henderson Creek Community coordinator Sara Lovitz's highlights were the Living History Day and the Squash Club planting, "and much more!" says Sara.

2011 highlights for Pamela Gill, community coordinator Glen Eden, have all centred on people. "The help we have had from our community has been phenomenal," she says.

Also, Pamela has been welcoming Wiremu Epara to the team as assistant stream ranger. Wiremu comes from the Walsh Trust

via the Mainstream Project, which aims to get people with disabilities back into mainstream employment. "Working streamside is great for the taha wairua (spiritual health) as well as taha hinengaro (mental health)," she says. "It's a nice supportive environment to get back into the workforce and is a great opportunity for Wiremu, for us, for WINZ and for the Walsh Trust."

For Karena Way, Ranui-Massey Community Coordinator, two years of hard work on the plantings around the border of the golf course have been completed.

Another standout event was the inaugural Tuakana-Teina planting and art activity project with St Dominic's secondary school and Swanson Primary. "The relationship between the two groups of girls went way further than we had hoped, with both groups learning and sharing so much between them," she says.

Karena also cites as a highlight the The Great Tui Forest birdfeeder sculpture created by members of the Agape Trust, an intellectual disabilities care provider that has been involved with Project Twin Streams for the past seven years. "This year they had the chance to exhibit their intelligent initiatives, individual skills and collaborative whakawhaungatanga (relationship building), combined with knowledge they have gained from working with PTS, when they designed, made and exhibited their wonderful birdfeeders made wholly from recycled resources."

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