

Fun Day Out | 2016

for Our Special Children | AOTEAROA



“Fun Day Out for Our Special Children”

Interfaith Friendship Group (IFG) launched its first joint community program in partnership with Kaipatiki Community Facilities Trust, PHAB (Physically Disabled and Able Bodied Association) and Kaipatiki Local Board, Auckland Council – “Fun Day Out for Our Special Children” at the North Shore Event Centre on 4 September 2016.

The main objectives set and achieved for this event were to:

- Celebrate special children, their caregivers, parents and their families, with a Fun Day Out in a safe, loving environment.
- Provide information on special needs resources and support available in the community.
- Provide opportunity for different faith and community groups to work together to serve the community, building bridges promoting unity and harmony.

This Free Event had twenty-two stalls of fun, creative, challenging activities and lots of entertainment; twenty stalls from community support agencies providing valuable information on special needs; a food court that served a wide assortment of mouthwatering food, creating a very memorable and joyful day for everyone involved.

The Organisers express their sincere gratitude to all the volunteers and contributors who worked tirelessly, shared unconditional love and generosity to make this ‘Fun Day Out’ a Success.

Finally, a big thank you to everyone in the community for coming along and supporting this event.



Interfaith Friendship Group (IFG) launched in Auckland - 11 April 2016

FORWARD

New Zealand Inter Faith : Dialogue to Deeds

I am humbled that I have been asked to contribute a few words to this Souvenir programme that reflects the highest ideal of all Religious teaching that UNITY IS DIVINITY...that it is LOVE and SERVICE to the needy that can bind all people in the bond of Humanity.

If we are HUMANITY...we must have Human Unity. If we are MANKIND...Man must be KIND.

When I came to New Zealand with my wife in April 2016, little did I realize that the message I conveyed at the fantastic Inter Faith session we had in a Church, would have such profound, positive impact.

I conveyed the message that the Sathya SAI International Organization in Malaysia , after the 9/11 disaster in USA had got all major religious groups to form an Inter Faith Alliance... NOT TO TALK about religion, but to hold hands and to SERVE the poor and needy and to promote HUMAN VALUES. Thus, in Malaysia (a majority Muslim Nation) for more than 15 years, significant Religious leaders, with broad and Universal Visions, have UNITED under the banner of the Friendship Group for Inter Religious Service.

It is significant that the major Faith Groups who attended that Inter Faith Action launch session in Auckland, saw the relevance of the programme for New Zealand (a Rainbow Nation...more rainbow than Malaysia) and you launched this incredible FUN DAY OUT FOR OUR SPECIAL CHILDREN in September 2016...hardly 5 months from the launch of your own INTERFAITH FRIENDSHIP GROUP (IFG).

Dear Friends, more than Malaysia, New Zealand will now be a more powerful Torchbearer for the ideal of an ACTION ORIENTED INTER FAITH ALLIANCE...moving Inter faith from the Rooms of DIALOGUE to positive DEEDS on the ground, impacting the lives of common citizens of Nations.

I am off to Canada and USA in February 2017 and will be addressing Inter Faith Launch sessions in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Los Angeles and other cities yet to be confirmed. My main message will be...FOLLOW THE AUCKLAND MODEL. Much of what I will show is what you have achieved in less than 5 months.

Thank You New Zealand, Thank You Auckland, for helping to inspire other nations through your IFG and your Unity through Action. I Pray that your Programme will be a sustainable one... uniting all people all over NZ and that the UNITED stream of LOVE that the IFG has started, will become a Mighty RIVER OF LOVE & UNITY. Thank You and God Bless all people who see the ONENESS of DIVINITY and the great contribution we can all make, if we Unite Under the ONE DIVINE FORCE that guides the Universe, while all uphold the great teachings of their respective Religions.

LOVE ALL SERVE ALL : HELP EVER HURT NEVER

Jega Jagadeesan (Jegathesan)

Founding Member and Advisor of the Malaysian:
FRIENDSHIP GROUP FOR INTER RELIGIOUS SERVICE (FGIS)
SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION (SSIO)

Mission of “Inter faith Friendship Group” (IFG)

All faiths urge humanity to be good, do good and to work together harmoniously for the benefit of the needy while fostering love and peace. The world today, however, is facing great problems due to religious conflicts showering untold miseries, because of the acts of a relative few. New Zealand has by Divine Grace been spared from religious conflicts. However, we cannot be complacent. We have to build mutual love and understanding to ensure that the negative waves of conflict do not wash onto the shores of our Nation.

To safeguard this beautiful Nation of ours, various faith groups have extended their support, under an informal “Interfaith Friendship Group (IFG)” banner, to join hands and work together to foster interfaith harmony, love and understanding; help the needy and the underprivileged; promote universal human values and thereby contribute to ‘National Unity and a Caring Society’.



Ravi Rudra

Coordinator - Interfaith Friendship Group (IFG)
& Sathya Sai International Organisation of NZ
(SSIONZ)





Honourable Phil Goff

(Mayor of Auckland)

Our children are our most precious gifts. Working to better the lives for the next generation is the greatest legacy we can leave. I congratulate all of the groups involved in the Fun Day Out event. Your tireless hard work to bring the community together is what makes Auckland a better place. I wish you all the very best for your event.



Dame Susan Devoy

(Race Relations Commissioner - New Zealand Human Rights Commission)

Congratulations and thank you for organising this special event. I am the mother of four sons and often ask myself what will their future hold. We live in one of the most ethnically diverse and peaceful nations on earth. Yet we look at all the conflict around the world and realise we must keep working together to enhance that reputation.

The first "Interfaith Friendship Group" event is an example of what we can achieve together, an opportunity to share what unites us as Kiwis and in particular acknowledging those children and their families who face extra challenges.

I know this fun day out for children will be a special day and I wish to express my gratitude to those volunteers who have made this day happen.



Inspector Rakesh Naidoo

(Strategic Advisor Race Relations - New Zealand Human Rights Commission)

"What you're doing here today is simply stunning. It's a real celebration - to bring together so many faith groups all with a common purpose. This is a great example of how the communities can actually come together, focus on the things that are really important to them and get to know one another.

Two things that are very important is education and contacts for bringing people together. Here you're doing both and people are having a great time, so magnificent!

We're very keen for you to be a part of the National Campaign the Human Rights Commission has launched - # "That's Us" going to that website and sharing positive stories of what has been done in the community and to see how we can make New Zealand that much a better place to live in."



Ruth Cleveland

(President, Auckland Inter Faith Council)

"First I would like to commend all of you because this is a fantastic event. I would think in my experience and I have been in Auckland for 27 years, its unprecedented to get together the different faith groups, to have their volunteers work for the broader community. So, congratulations it's a great event, a great turn out.

It's a great development. It's one thing to just acknowledge we have different faiths and we accept each other but that's just Stage One. The next Stage is based on our common love for humanity, what can we do to serve the larger community, to get a partnership going. I think this is a really, really good example, a good template. You need to get a partnership going with these agencies in society as well as the faith groups, work together, use the volunteerism spirit that faith groups have with the expertise of the agencies that know how to do things. It's really excellent, I hope this is not the last and this is the first of a series of things that can be done.

It's very important especially for Auckland being one of the most multicultural and multi religious cities in the world. When we get our faith groups working together it creates a great energy that helps people understand each other, respect each other and really feel like we're a part of the same society, we have the same concerns."



Jocelyn Armstrong

(Chairperson, Religious Diversity Centre in Aotearoa New Zealand Trust)

The Interfaith Friendship Group has set us all an exciting example of building unity in our Auckland City of great diversity. The 'Fun Day out for Our Special Children' brought people of different faiths together. Not only did they meet and talk with one another, but they organised together, prepared food stalls together, cared for and played with the children together, and worked as volunteers together.

Everyone will have gained a new appreciation of one another; new friendships begun across the cultural and faith boundaries; old ones refreshed and strengthened; energies multiplied. The Religious Diversity Centre in Aotearoa New Zealand salutes a Day rich in achievement and promise.



Whaea Taini Drummond

(Te Roopu Awhina O Wairoa Trust)

“So magic! We were meant to come. The wairua (spirit) was felt instantly and it went straight through the body. The warmth and interaction between people was so amazing. We didn’t need to be introduced to each other, it was like we knew everybody. It’s all Aroha (love) - sending love all the time.

I’ve never seen a programme like this. I would like to see a programme like this on this side of Auckland (East / South).”



Fr. Emile Frische, MHM

(Parish Priest, St Marks Catholic Church, Pakuranga, Auckland)

A Fun Day Out for Our Special Children certainly is a very special day. Even more so when people from all Faith Traditions are invited to take part. These children deserve the love and care and appreciation that the Interfaith Friendship Group is wanting to give them, and so on behalf of all at St. Mark’s Catholic Parish in Pakuranga, I thank you for your commitment to these children, and pray the blessing of God on you all who give of yourselves totally to this ministry.



Deacon Chris Sullivan

(St Marks Catholic Church, Pakuranga, Auckland)

“We’ve been very impressed with the level of organisation, a very professional organisation. It’s been a lot of fun for the children who have participated and it’s been a lot of fun for the people of our own church who have come and participated. We have had a lot youth from our catholic church, St Marks Pakuranga, and some of the families in our parish who have Special Needs children who have come and participated as well. I think it’s been a great event.

It’s been really wonderful to see so many different people from different faith groups participating, sharing their faith, doing service for the community and getting to know each other, as well as building those relations which are do important going forward.

It was a wonderful way for people of different faiths to work together for greater understanding, compassion, and peace. Many of our people today have asked, will there be another event like this next year?



Venerable Abbess Manshin

(Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Temple New Zealand)

We would like to congratulate the Interfaith Friendship Group for its first joint-community program – “Fun Day Out for Our Special Children”. It is important to continually work towards maintaining and celebrating the peace and interfaith harmony that we have in New Zealand. This community event is another step forward in bringing our community together as well as supporting the needs of these special children in our community.



Annie Ng

(Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Temple New Zealand)

It's fantastic! It's so awesome, but very important, I see the joy, the happiness in everyone, not only the volunteers, its everyone together who are here, they feel that they are so blessed and they are enjoying every part, the art, the crafts to the food.

What we are doing today is very important, to maintain and bring together the interfaith groups and communities altogether, it's fantastic. This is just the beginning, there is more to come!



Ikhlaq Kashkari

(President NZ Muslim Federation)

“It's been a fantastic event. Wonderful to see all the community galvanised together, putting their hands together and giving these Special Kids a wonderful time. It's been great that you have been able to organise this. It's been an absolute pleasure to be a part and parcel of it.

The Muslim community as such, when there's a need, you just call us, we're always there to help and provide support, that we can possibly provide.”



Daud Azimullah

(Auckland Interfaith Council & The Federation of Islamic Associations of NZ)

“I can say from the Interfaith Council's point of view this is an excellent event. I can see the arrangements have been excellent and the organisation too. I am so impressed by the numbers of volunteers. I think the whole programme is beautiful. It's going to be very popular in coming years, I can see that. Good luck to everybody involved.”



Tzu Chi

(Foundation for Buddhist Compassionate Relief)

Steve Hsieh – “Thank you for inviting us. Obviously, we have a big turnout, thank you for this opportunity. This is the first time for us to be involved with City Council, kids with special needs, also the opportunity to network with other Charity Organisations and know each other, broaden our network amongst each other. We can act together as one to do more events like this one more often.”



Tiffany Tu – “It went really well. The first time for us working with other groups, everybody enjoyed themselves. A fantastic day! One of the things that has come out of this activity is that working together, you can achieve something spectacular! For us it was nice to make new friends, together we can achieve a lot more.”



Sikh Youth Group

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa; Waheguru ji ki Fateh

The Sikh Youth are very honoured and excited to be a part of this Inaugural Interfaith Friendship Group event and coming together to enthusiastically participate in the Fun Day Out for Our Special Children.

We are also extremely grateful for the opportunity to work alongside other Faith members extending our unique services to make this a great and a wonderful event.

The theme chosen “National Unity and Caring Society” is close to the heart of the Sikh Youth. We are charged by the Sikh Faith and are duty-bound in sharing the Sikh values with the community and learn from them.

We congratulate the organisers for providing this platform and an excellent opportunity for interaction and fostering greater harmony, thriving happily through the sense of service.

May God bless us all.

Activity Stalls





Imagination Playground



Rock Up



"We want to get across to the youth of today how important it is to realise the consequences of their actions. You make good choices and good things happen for you. You make silly choices and bad things happen for you. The Rockup is a good example of this – you grab the wrong hand-hold and you fall down; you grab the right hand-hold and you successfully get to the top!

We all make mistakes! But it is about learning how to correct what we are doing to be successful and to fit in with society. Everything we do is help people change the way they do for the better and to be positive!"

– Rockup Team

Circability



Dancing



Magician



Costume Characters



Bubble Station



Face Painting



Public



Kids





Food Court







INFORMATION STALL GROUPS

EPILEPSY NZ

"I'm really enjoying it. It's really busy which is good to see. This sort of event basically means we can get a presence in the community. People who have epilepsy or any other sort of condition have an avenue to contact people who may be able to help them, because this environment shows people what is actually in the community. Sometimes people who get lost in the health system don't know what to do and where to go for support."

Supported independent living for people with physical and intellectual disabilities

"We promote support for independent living for people with physical and intellectual disabilities so clients can stay independent in their communities for as long as possible. It's brilliant; there have been a lot of people, a lot of people helping out which has been amazing. These sorts of events allow families to see what's actually out there. I think a lot of families are isolated and without going out to these sorts of events and finding out what's out there, they don't actually know. It would be brilliant to have more of these going on for families. It's a way for families to be able to get together and meet other people as well. Honestly it's incredible, absolutely incredible to see so many people here on a Sunday, Father's Day as well, for being able to be here for people with disabilities!"

Whanau – Te Kotuku Ki Te Rangi - Maori Mental Health Organisation

"Look this is fabulous! To be honest this is the first time I've ever been to an event like this. The atmosphere here is amazing, this whole place here is pumping and the kids so well entertained, this is great!"

We do an array of services from residential support through to out in the community. I am here to promote particularly our Whanau Respite Care. Lot of people have come through, I'm nearly running out of resources, we're only part way through the day, people have shown great interest. It's given us a space, that's provided us to talk about our services as a whole. We get to be able to meet other likeminded organisations. All walks of life have been coming past here, because we're all interlinked somehow, so getting us all associated together in the one space has just been enormous!"

SPELD NZ- helps people with specific learning disabilities

"It's fantastic, the organisation has been over the moon, everyone's been so helpful. It's just lovely to see all the activities for the children as well as the parents, especially the teenagers and young people who have come out to help all the children with the different activities, it's just brilliant to see."

SPELD NZ helps people with specific learning disabilities It's been a great opportunity for us and we very grateful, really appreciate it. It's fabulous as so many of these agencies cross over, we don't just work in silos. We get a lot of families ringing us and asking for help, it's great for us to be able to know what other organisations are out in the community, so that, if they don't quite fit with our group, we know who to refer them to. For me, networking is another really important part of a day like this. I really appreciate the opportunity."

Davis Dyslexia

"This event is huge for public awareness! If a person doesn't know there's someone to help, how do they find it, because school systems are not very well known?"

Disability Connect

"I love events like this because it's a great way of promoting, being together with people, communicating and getting everybody to share knowledge. This is what it's all about."



REFLECTIONS

Pravedh Sewnarain (Divine Life Prayer Group)

On behalf of the Divine Life Prayer Group, I would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the Interfaith Friendship Group for allowing us as a group to participate in the "Fun Day Out for Our Special Children". The event was well organised and a huge success. Kindly consider our group next year for any similar event. We totally endorse this event and look forward to any future such activities.

Sarah Haggar (Masters Research on Interfaith)

I was invited to attend as part of my Masters' research on Interfaith. I have been coming along to all the organising and planning meetings, trying to see how all the different Faith groups that are involved, are working together and how everyone is getting along, coming together for a common goal to make this event happen, so seeing it all play out is amazing.

It's been incredible, I haven't really seen anything like this. It's amazing to see the amount of volunteers, the amount of people spending so much time and putting so much effort into trying to make this one thing happen.

I think this sort of event should be regular, get more people involved and have a bigger effect. From what I have heard people saying today, they're not used to these sort of events, they don't usually have these kinds of opportunities to get out and get to know the community which has been pretty amazing!

Peter Brens (Parent)

I wish to express my delight in finding something that was focused purely on providing fun for those children who often have to watch from the side-line due to their physical or mental disabilities. It was good to see an event that focused on a broad spectrum of children. I was impressed with the quality of games and entertainments that were provided during the event. I was particularly fascinated with the large blue. Part of me was drawn to the simplicity of these blue bricks, and observed a number of Dad's heavily involved with their children, the building of relationships. From the perspective of a parent, this event was engaging for parents and children of all disabilities. An opportunity for those in play, to be free to have fun, to be truly themselves.

Parent Perspective

"I was very surprised that this is the very first time, it's very well organised. Especially when it's something brand new and everyone's just come together it just flows! Very nice, we're having a great time, we'll be back again.

The thing I really like too, was that all the volunteers acting so responsibly, also doubling up on the dancefloor, getting involved in everything and doing everything as well!"

A Proud Aunty

I would like to express how wonderful the Fun Day Out for Our Special Children event on Sunday was for our family. My three-year-old niece is on the Autism Spectrum and it has been

a journey of discovery for our family as we seek out support, activities and opportunities for her to thrive.

On Sunday three generations of our family (niece, mum, aunty and Gran) came along to the event at the North Shore Events Centre – we were genuinely touched and delighted with the amazing range of activities, food, and resources provided for our special children and their families. We all felt that the event was a wonderful reflection of a positive and supportive community – my niece had an absolute blast, she ran laps around the indoor area exclaiming ‘cool cool!’ and enjoyed many of the activities (especially the bubble booth!). For our family, it was touching to see her enjoying herself so much in a safe, fun, judgement-free environment.

This was a truly beautiful event, so inclusive of diversity across many streams. A special mention to the friendly volunteers who really made us feel welcome from the moment we stepped through the door. Thank you so much for making this event happen, it was clear that a lot of hard work had gone into it and our family want you to know that we very much appreciate all the effort - these types of events make New Zealand a very special place to live. Thank you to Kaipatiki Community Facilities Trust and partners for making our special children feel treasured by their community.



Pam King (Principal of Wairau Valley Special School)

“I’ve really enjoyed all of the activities and I’ve seen all of the children being engaged and how fantastic they all are. I’m involved because I’m Principal of Wairau Valley Special School, so I wanted to come along and support you and our children and see what activities were going to be available for them.

I think it’s a fantastic thing you are doing here. I think the activities you have provided for the students are really, really good and making sure that they want to have lots of fun and get involved. We would be very keen to have another day like this in the future. You’re doing a great job! Thank you very much.”

Care Giver & Support Staff at Auckland Special School

“Today has been really great especially for something new, the organisation is fantastic! I would definitely recommend it to the school, it’s been great. It’s been great to see the volunteers intermingling with everybody and the young people with disabilities, it’s been great to see that family atmosphere.”

Tina Jones (Youth in Transition)

“When I arrived, I brought one of the young people with us, she’s got anxiety issues, but the fact we walked in and everybody made us so welcome – for her to see everybody just working together, the young people having a ball out here – we saw some of the young people singing on stage – and I looked across at her – just to see her having an amazing time was priceless! It’s just incredible! It’s something she wants to get involved in herself next time – so yeah it’s incredible!”

Sathya Sai International Organisation of New Zealand (SSIONZ)



Mark Stinson

(The Church Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)

"The Fun Day Out for Special Children" was a great idea, well executed by an interfaith and cross community team.



Michelle Whiu

(Kaiwhakahaere Community Co-ordinator Events & Resources, Kaipatiki)

"Today's been Awesome! Feedback that I've had back from our public – children with disabilities and without -they've had an awesome day and could we please do it again next year. So, in terms of the Event Management, you can ask for no more. Fantastic job everybody"



Murali Kruthiventy

(National Council President – SSIONZ)

"I'm very happy, very happy. What matters to us is that we worked as a team and what comes out here is the unity amongst all the faith groups as well. There is a template set now on how we can work together and also address many issues in the community. It's a fun day for everyone, making others happy, you're happy as well."



Selven Naidoo

(National Council Deputy President – SSIONZ)

"We achieved all the objectives we set out to do – all the faith groups got together, worked together, everybody had fun and that's wonderful! Today's event, it's a perfect model for the rest of the world. New Zealand is a small country and if we can start a programme like this and sustain it's a prototype for the rest of the world to follow."



St John Youth (Takapuna)



Fun Day Out - IFG Volunteers

Acknowledgement

The Sathya Sai International Organisation of New Zealand (SSIONZ) would like to express its heartfelt gratitude and sincere appreciation in making the inaugural "Fun Day Out for Our Special Children" a big success. On behalf of both SSIONZ and Interfaith Friendship Group (IFG) we thank all the supporters, volunteers, well-wishers and contributors including:

- The Honourable Phil Goff – Mayor of Auckland
- Dame Susan Devoy -Race Relations Commissioner, New Zealand Human Rights Commission
- Dato' Jega Jagadeesan – Friendship Group for Inter Religious Service (FGIS) Malaysia & Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO)
- Auckland Interfaith Council
- Religious Diversity Centre in Aotearoa New Zealand Trust
- Kaipataki Community Facilities Trust
- PHAB (PHysically Disabled and ABLe Bodied Assn Inc)
- Kaipataki Local Board, Auckland Council
- IHC North Shore Auckland
- Speld New Zealand
- Renaissance (Supported Independent Living)
- Te Kotuku Ki Te Rangi Trust (Mental Health)
- Geneva Elevator
- Epilepsy New Zealand
- Auckland Dyspraxia Trust
- Dyslexia Support
- Creative Abilities- Residential & Day Services
- Children's Autism Foundation
- Autism New Zealand
- Childs Play OT (Occupational Therapy)
- Alongside You (Parent Support)
- Rockup
- Circability NZ
- Pacific Hair Design
- Pacific Body Art
- St John – Youth, Takapuna
- 'The Golf Lady'
- Ella Kumar and Bollywood Dance Group
- Celebrations Group Limited- Stand Out Design
- On Fire Design
- AA Band
- Printing.com
- NZ Infotech Services
- North Shore Events Centre (NSEC)
- Sound and Entertainment Team
- Sathya Sai Preschool Rongomai
- Sathya Sai Values Education and Services Trust (NZ)

Interfaith Friendship Group Partners

- Te Roopu Awhina O Wairoa Trust
- St Marks Catholic Church, Pakuranga
- Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Temple
- Buddhist Compassionate Relief – Tzu Chi Foundation NZ
- NZ Muslim Association
- Sikh Youth Group
- Divine Life Prayer Group
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

Community Support Agencies

- Specialised Counselling
- Yes Disability Resource Centre
- PHAB Pacifica
- Disability Connect
- Special Olympics New Zealand

We apologise to any person or organisation who has been inadvertently omitted from this acknowledgement.



**“If there is righteousness in the heart,
There will be beauty in the character.**

**If there is beauty in the character,
 There will be harmony in the home.
When there is harmony in the home,**

There will be order in the nation.

**When there is order in the nation,
 There will be peace in the world.”**

