



**Ambury Park Centre**  
*Riding therapy with a difference*

## **President's Annual Report 2016**

Dear Members, Visitors, Staff, Volunteers and Whanau,

The members of the Board welcome you to the 2017 Annual General Meeting, Monday 7th August. It is an effort for people to come out at night in winter. Thank you for doing so.

Ambury Park Centre is, as our brochure and website state, a unique establishment where horses help to change lives.

How does this happen?

Most of you present are familiar with the three areas of operation that make this possible but to summarise they are:

-Intensive and Remedial Riding Therapy for on average 80 children adolescents and adults at any given time. We employ a trained Occupational Therapist for Intensive Therapy and an experienced instructor/coach for Remedial Therapy. It is well known the movement of the horse works to strengthen the muscles of human uprightness in the rider. Perhaps not so well known is that riding therapy supports cognitive and speech development. Beyond that the therapies promote progress socially, emotionally, behaviourally, educationally and psychologically. Success with children on the autistic spectrum is significant. There are no bounds to the therapeutic impact of riding therapy and the relationship with a horse, with a broad range of disabilities and other challenges. Ambury is the ideal indoor and outdoor environmental stimulus for riding therapy. Regular progress reports are shared with the clients and families.

-A Secondary School for students who are in need of an alternative education for a matrix of reasons that may be related to learning, behaviour and social, emotional, psychological and psychiatric well-being. The school can cater for up to 30 students. Qualified English and mathematics teachers are employed in the school assisted by a number of teacher aides. Subjects other than English and Mathematics are studied through Te Kura Pounamu (Correspondence School) including further NCEA Standards, with Ambury staff support. Horse riding, theory and horse care and Equine NCEA Standards are part of the Curriculum taught by the Head of Equine and another

instructor. There are teacher aides or support staff to assist both in the classrooms and in Equine. Creative Art programmes are provided by the Centre's art facilitator in both the school and the vocational programme. Assessment in Literacy and Numeracy and NCEA standards are regularly reported on to Whanau and agencies.

In 2016 the Education Review office visited Ambury Park Centre, spending time over three days reviewing the school, including the delivery of Equine learning.

The two reviewers were taken with the concept of Ambury, made some suggestions and wrote a favourable report. They understood the hurdle the Centre faces to fund its students.

-An adult Vocational programme for about 29 offers Life Skills learning both at the Centre and in the community. Individual aspirations are also addressed. The Vocational clients have the opportunity to ride and they are involved in horse care. Literacy and Numeracy skills are supported as well. The course is managed by the Vocational Manager and several support staff. An MSD Review was conducted for the Vocation programme, which took place over 3 days. The thorough review of its delivery resulted in a positive report that ensured the Ministry funding for the next three years,

In both the school and vocational areas the students and clients follow individual programmes previously discussed and formulated with them, their whanau and other professionals involved at ILP (Individual Learning Plan) meetings. There are follow up meetings to share progress. Reporting to clients and whanau, largely pictorial are sent on line. As with the riding therapy, the horse is the magic, where its influence has an incalculable multi-faceted positive influence on all of the challenges mentioned.

How is this possible? Ambury Park Centre is wonderfully supported by people, trusts, ministries and agencies that recognise it strives to make a difference in the lives of children, adolescents and adults who are in need not just of support but of something different.

What is different? The horse is central to everything! Every person is treated for his or her particular needs both in riding therapy, riding and education. The value of this is fully understood. Taking a person from where he or she is at in any learning situation allows for development that is both solid and accelerant.

What of the horse? We know the physical benefits of the movement of the horse in developing muscular strength and better mobility, and that the relationship between a rider and a horse fosters social, behavioural, educational and psychological improvement. There is something transporting about a horse.

Quote from Simon Barnes, 'Save our Stables', The Spectator, January 2017: *'Horses are great teachers. Children who spend time around horses learn many important things. They learn that you never get love on your own terms; they learn that the pursuit of mastery is destructive to both parties. Above all they learn that understanding, forgiveness and calmness get better results than roaring and punishment.'*

*The benefits that horses bring to people are most easily seen with the great organization, Riding for the Disabled. I've seen chair-bound children –children who spend their lives looking up at everybody-helped onto a horse and becoming at once tall, mobile and powerful. I have led horses for such children and seen the transformation even in a silent completely locked-in child. They fly on borrowed wings and for half an hour they're not just as good as the rest of us-they're better.*

*Horses also teach lessons about courage, but it's not the same sort of courage as bungee-jumping or the Cresta Run. With horses the basis of the courage is trust. Even the simplest maneuvers require trust; and it has to be a two-way thing. We're told that team sports are great because they teach us to trust across the boundaries of individuality, class, race, colour, and religion. Horse riding asks you to extend this trust across the boundaries of species."*

Riding and riding therapy provide a way to trust oneself and eventually others for those who live with many challenges.

There are many illustrations at Ambury of the wonder that horses engender. Earlier this year I had occasion to spend time with our riding therapists to hear about some of these milestones. I was deeply affected by what was recounted to me.

Two Examples were:

1. A high needs school student with Autism who had attended the Ambury Park Centre School for just a few weeks, presented as noisy, frequently unheeding and physically very unsettled. When going to a paddock to see "his" horse, his teacher aide (experienced in riding therapy) asked him to wait to give the horse a chance to come to him. He was able to follow the request and the horse did not only come to him but nuzzled into his chest for at least 10 minutes, during which time the boy stood perfectly still. The horse knew the needs of this beginning remedial rider.

2. A child in riding therapy was not able to be at all tactile with “her” horse. She could not bear to touch the horse other than accept being sat on the saddle for the therapy ride. It was decided to try her riding with another child and from observing that child touching “her” horse, she will now not only pat Holly, but will put her leg over herself and lean back once on the horse and touch its tail. Previously she would collapse and have to be fully lifted onto the horse. She has since become more social and is beginning to speak.

Every one of these brief stories tells a magic. They represent what seem to be very small steps but for these young people they are giant ones on the pathway to developing physically, emotionally, educationally and socially. We often mention the bigger success stories of first sitting up and learning to walk as outcomes of riding therapy after a considerable time. It is equally affecting to know of the small gains along the way. The joy and wonder of the children, their whanau and the therapists in these moments cannot be captured here, but it was felt it in their telling.

Auckland Central Educational Service (Alternative Education) guaranteed to fund 7 students for the school and Aim High Alternative Education funded 3. Others had funding from CFYS, ORS (Ongoing Resource Funding) or GSE (Group Special Education), Ministry Intensive Wraparound Service and Te Kahu Toi students came with Teacher Aide and other supports. Otherwise there are referrals from other agencies, schools and directly from whanau. There are several students who have come through mental health. Seeking funding for students who have no agency support, which is often the case for mental health young people, is challenging and administratively time consuming. This can be frustrating when we know Ambury is likely to have a positive effect for such referrals. More are referred by CAMHS, NHS, Tu Rangatahi (YTP) ACC and CFU, medical professionals and schools.

The Vocational clients’ are mostly referred by whanau and MSD funding supports them to an extent. Therapy riders are mostly funded by whanua with some having agency funding from such as ACC, Cerebral Palsy Society, Wilson Home, Crippled Children’s Society, Head Injury Society, Special Schools and others.

Three Ministries of Health, Education; and Social Development continue to provide welcome funding respectively towards therapy riding, the school and the vocational programme.

None of the magic of Ambury would be possible without the belief so many have in Ambury Park Centre's therapies. The Centre is blessed with financial contributions that have ensured the difference APC makes in many lives.

The board is extremely grateful for all who support the Centre - charitable trusts, community trusts, gaming trusts, other trusts and associations, and individual donors.

[ Family Charitable trusts that have from Ambury's fledging beginnings been a mainstay in its success are the Maurice Paykel Charitable Trust, Joyce Fisher Charitable Trust, Janet Fisher Trust, J M Thompson Trust and the Lou and Iris Fisher Charitable Trust. Other very long term valued contributors are Foundation North (formerly The ASB Community Trust), PH Picot Charitable Trust, Sir John Logan Campbell Residuary Estate, Kelliher Charitable Trust, Chenery Memorial Trust and Silk Route Ltd (formerly Samar Kand Trust), Auckland Skycity Community Trust, NZ Lottery Grants Board, ARA Lodge no. 348 IC Charitable Trust, Geoffrey and Nell Erne Adams Charitable Trust, Ziera Shoes NZ Ltd, NZ Riding for the Disabled, Auckland Council, Rotary Club of Mangere, REM Systems, Grove Hardware Ltd and Warren and Caroline Grove.

The Woolf Fisher Trust from 2006-2008 made a very significant contribution to the Centre establishing for it a \$300,000 capital base.

Other donations that were gratefully received came from ANZ Foundation, Fairfax (Round the Bays), Michael Otto, Martin Thomson, Tim Chan, Arthur Mathewson, Anshiang Huang, Ange Smith, Beverley Hill, Linda Gill, Helen Petersen, Ilmars Gravis, Baradene College, Vincent Maire, Eileen King, I & S Christian Family Trust, Lee Pihama, Epsom Totara Club, M & C Futter, Hutchison Family, David Hanna, Catherine Young, Ian McHardy, Shaina Latimour, Happy Wanderers Club, Probus and many other individual donors. There are numerous incidental donations from Board members.

Significant grants from Gaming Trusts in 2016 were received from from Southern Trust, Grassroots Trust, Pegases Sports Foundation Ltd., Pelorus Trust, North and South Trust, Pub Charity Ltd, Four Winds Foundation Ltd, Infinity Foundation, Lion Foundation, New Zealand Community Trust, Mt Wellington Foundation, Blue Sky Community Trust, Pegasus Sports Foundation, Pelorus Trust, North and South Trust, Ltd, Grassroots Trust and Trillian Trust.

The Board was indebted to the Ambury Park Riding for the Disabled Foundation for funding.

All contributors are greatly valued by Ambury Park Centre.

Financing Ambury Park Centre is a challenge but all at Ambury are heartened and motivated by the wonderful endorsement the contributions bring, to offer the best in riding therapy, quality and individually relevant learning programmes for the students and vocational clients, and ways to extend what the Centre offers.

To this end in 2017 the Remedial Therapist's position has been increased to full time (temporarily initially) with the purpose of endeavouring to increase the number of remedial therapy riders and trialling a holiday programme. The latter is in addition to the riding programme.

Vital to the successes of Ambury Park Centre is maintaining a cohesive, talented, experienced and qualified staff to deliver high quality riding therapy, positive outcomes for secondary students with various challenges and independence focused programmes for the adult clients with mainly intellectual disabilities. There are key management roles in each area:

Andrea Menzies, with four years as riding instructor at APC and considerable previous experience and qualifications, is the recently appointed head of the Equine department. She had developed a good understanding of the Riding Therapy and is pursuing training in this. She has settled enthusiastically into the role and among many achievements has also secured the Centre two new horses free of charge- Magpie and Zara. A riding instructor, two riding therapists, a stable manager, stable assistant and support staff comprise her staff.

Elizabeth Warden continues to expertly head the school with its mathematics teacher and several teacher aides, to ensure progress for the students.

Keating Oakley-Browne has headed Vocational for many years and heads a team of dedicated support staff enabling our adult clients to develop life skills and confidence in community participation.

Noel Morrison, as the Centre's Director/Principal is a skilled manager of staff, who promotes client and student achievement in all areas in a calm and steady environment. He has a considerable administrative role and is a great ambassador for the Centre, promoting it to the community at large.

This report notes that Ambury Park Centre is fortunate with the calibre, dedication and absolute empathy shown to clients, students and whanau from its staff.

Of course fundamental to the Centre's existence are our clients and students who are to be congratulated for working to overcome their challenges.

Professional Learning Development, from which individual staff members and the Centre as a whole benefit, continues to be a focus of the board and the Director/Principal. There is a good mix of individual and Centre-wide Professional Development Learning. The goals are to promote staff satisfaction, personal growth and maintain Ambury Park Centre as a relevant and progressive riding therapy and educational organisation. We are often fortunate to acquire funding to assist with PDL. In 2016 the key PDL opportunities for the staff were with Autism Auckland, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Non- Violent Intervention and Kohia Education Centre courses, all relating to strategies for supporting young people with challenges. For Equine RDA training, Horse Health Clinics held at APC and Equine Assisted Learning courses were attended by Equine staff. All staff received First Aid training. The Pasifika education focus was continued with the support of a Ministry of Education facilitator.

There were two significant staff changes in 2016 with the resignation of our very long serving Head of Equine, Debbie Freeman, and the Intensive Riding therapist Bonnie Chapman who had been with the Centre three years.

Debbie who had been at the Centre for 28 years was fare-welled in December. Debbie was recruited from The Fortune Centre in England by the first Director of Ambury, Dr Jill Calveley. Debbie, well qualified in riding therapy, instructing and equine theory, made a wonderful contribution to the development and the success of Ambury Park Centre. She was a commanding and empathetic presence who guided very many staff, students and clients. Bonnie was an excellent intensive therapist who was highly regarded by all at Ambury and the clients and whanau. Bonnie ensured that the riding therapy was fun, building the resources for game activities in the therapy mix. She achieved excellent results and earned the respect of her clients, their whanau and all at Ambury.

The role of our many volunteers is paramount in the delivery of both Intensive and Remedial riding therapy. It is true we would not be able to offer these therapies without their dedicated input. As horse leaders and side walkers they ensure the safety and confidence of the riders. On behalf of the Board I sincerely thank our band of volunteers for choosing Ambury Park Centre. The volunteers' support goes beyond the riding therapy. On Car Boot sale days, Farm day and the film evening they are there for the Centre. Their sale of cakes at the Car boot sale earlier in the year must

have been a record. The Board is indebted to Debra Moore, the Volunteer Coordinator for her organisation on such occasions and for her wonderful work as coordinator. (A major triumph was Debra securing Ambury Park Centre as a Z Energy charity-Good in the Hood-for the month of May this year). The Board also acknowledges the outstanding contribution of the former Volunteer Coordinator, Carol Wiltshire. Among many other contributions she organised attractive new uniforms for the volunteers and was very active in supporting the last Arena dinner. Again in 2016 many Volunteer groups chose Ambury for their community volunteer days. When the outdoor or indoor environs look especially spruce we know a volunteer group has been – weeds miraculously disappear, shrubs and trees stand trim amongst new plants and indoors the sand and dust are briefly gone. The Board is grateful to Chorus, Lotto, BNZ, ANZ, EY and AIG in 2016 for this good work.

Of course our beautiful herd of 26-28 horses is the centre of everything. We lost two horses in 2016, which of course is always sad. Two new horses, Chocolate and Shamrock, joined the herd.

With funding from the Mazda Foundation the upgrade of the Centre's computers continued with the purchase of four tablets for school. The Vocational area is the next in line for upgrades.

The Centre held its annual Prize Giving in December to acknowledge the achievements of all clients and students, some of whom received prizes and trophies. Progress in riding therapy, riding, horse care, life skills and academic studies were recognised and pleasing achievements in NCEA were celebrated. The latter included some standards in Equine. Horse of the Year for Ambury Park Centre in 2016 was Kinsella! The Prize Giving was preceded by a very lively and imaginative riding display with our riders representing mounted police, rodeo and jockey riders and the Queen and her guards. It was a fun occasion that demonstrated the wonderful progress the riders had made.

In March the staff again organised their annual car boot Saturday event, which always attracts many vendors and crowds on the day. The Centre's horse rides and sausage sizzle are exceedingly popular as are all the home baking and preserves! It is a lively event with a great variety of wares for sale. As mentioned the staff is supported by volunteers with this event. The proceeds fund educational and community experience trips for the school students and vocational clients. This a very worthy event for which those involved are to be congratulated.



Staff and volunteers are always available to support the Ambury Farm with their fundraising day in October by offering horse rides. This is a way of recognising the wonderful benefits the Centre receives from the farm staff and Parks in general.

The board is grateful that the Equine staff and volunteers continue to offer riding to the wider community in school holiday periods as a fundraiser and a way of promoting the Centre as well as providing a service.

Another annual event the staff arranges is a barbecue evening in March as a social event offering whanau opportunities to meet the staff, hear about the programmes and see around the Centre.

The board plans to hold a film fundraising evening in 2017.

In 2016 the Centre began seeking funding for two important capital projects to be completed in 2017. One was a fencing project to divide a very large paddock into four to better group some of our herd, allow for better pasture recovery and thereby enhance the care of the horses. We secured the first contribution to this in 2016 from the ANZ foundation. (Early in 2017 the Lou and Iris Fisher Charitable Trust and the Janet Fisher Trust granted the major contributions to the fencing project.) The second was to drain and hard surface an area between our main building and the barns, which turned into a quagmire in the winter. (The Joyce Fisher Charitable Trust fully funded this project in February 2017). The Centre is most grateful for this generous assistance.

There were frequent visitors to Ambury, often community groups. People are impressed with the scale, ambience and what the Centre delivers. Visits are very much valued.

Several Service groups work with Ambury Park Centre to sometimes recommend students and clients attend Ambury and at other times to counsel and advise their clients and students at Ambury. In 2016 the Centre worked with Child Youth and Family Services now known as the Ministry for Vulnerable Children or Oranga Tamariki, Group Special Education, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Whirinaki, Kari Centre, Marinoto West, Marinoto North), the Child and Family Unit, Youth Transition Programme (Tu Rangatahi) ACC, Barnardos, the Wilson Home, Alternative Education, Ministry IWS Programme, Te Kahu Toi, many schools, special schools, other youth and adult providers and transition coordinators. The Centre is enriched by the relationships with these agencies.

The school's 2015 annual plan for learning, pastoral and administrative goals was evaluated and sent to the MOE. The Health and Safety policies and procedures were updated in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.

In 2016 two initiatives were begun to promote and support Ambury Park Centre. The President, Treasurer and Director/Principal worked with facilitators provided by the Joyce Fisher Charitable Trust in 2016 to formulate a current strategic plan spanning 2017-2020. A full process to formulate the plan included the staff and board members in the analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, The document was completed by the end of the year and will be most useful generally and in the Centre's future association with the Joyce Fisher Charitable Trust. The board is most thankful for this assistance.

Another venture for Ambury began in 2016 was led by Michael Otto, son of the late Lionel Otto, a founder of the Centre. Michael is a longtime friend of the Centre. He along with two associates is preparing marketing materials and has begun to approach people with a view to securing funding for our horses and students. They are also exploring possible assistance with horse expenses. It is very generous of them to give their time and very considerable skills to the Centre. The Centre is very fortunate and is humbled by these ventures.

Clearly several things of importance took place or began in 2016. Amidst all this we know that many worked to make it possible for the Centre to successfully continue its programmes with innovation and vigour. Amongst those who make this possible are the board members. I wish to acknowledge their dedication and role in keeping the Centre relevant and successful. Treasurer Doug Alexander, Accounts Person Claire Lingman and Secretary Caroline Grove worked very hard to this end. I treasure their support and that of Vice President Ian John, our talented film maker and overseer of Ambury fundraising events. All members work for the welfare of the Centre. I also sincerely thank Deane Maule, Janet Hepi, Vicky Latta, Christine O'Brien, Auckland Council Mangere and Otahuhu Local Board representative, Steve Whelan from Parks, Noel Morrison as Director/Principal and Belinda Sharp as staff representative. Parks and the farm staff are wonderful in keeping the Centre abreast of Parks developments and the farm personnel's assist the Centre with outdoor work. Claire Lingman stood down as Treasurer in 2016 after very many years and Doug Alexander was appointed to the position. Claire continues to be very involved as both the accounts person and a board member. That is fortunate for the Centre as was Claire's long commitment to the Treasurer's role.

It is now a quarter of a Century that our accountants BDO Auckland (formerly PKF Ross Melville) have audited the Centre's Annual Accounts pro bono. This has been and is an extraordinary contribution to Ambury Park Centre that has greatly impacted on the Centre's survival and success. The board especially thanks Graeme Lynch, Blair Stanley and all involved in working on the Centre's accounts over this time.

All at the Centre are deeply grateful to Mary Brook for continuing as the Centre's patron. We know Mary advocates for the Centre in the wider community and very much so with the Maurice Paykel Charitable Trust. The late Maurice Paykel, also a founder of Ambury Park Centre, was Mary's father. The Board and the staff are grateful to Mary, as am I. Mary volunteered in riding therapy in 2016.

The board and staff, motivated by the generosity of its many benefactors, are committed to stay abreast of developments in riding therapy, secondary education and vocational training. The enthusiasm of friends of the Centre, board, staff, whanau and caregivers, agencies, students and clients is real. With this incalculable goodwill Ambury should be assured of a bright future for all that it innovatively offers.

*Gaynor Brown*

Gaynor Brown QSM

President

Ambury Park Centre 7 August, 2017