



MESSAGE FROM Jana

I am sitting here at the very empty but clean Toy Library, reflecting on the year, and what a year it has been! I am sure a lot of us are glad to see the end of it and are grateful to live here in NZ where we can move fairly freely, celebrate Christmas with our families, travel for the holidays and don't need to wear masks in summer! It is a small price to pay that we can't leave the country. However, my thoughts are with all of you having family overseas (including myself) who we are not able to visit too soon.

The year started with myself being able to travel to Melbourne in February. I visited the largest toy fair in the Southern Hemisphere and came back with 600 photos of toys I loved 😊! I also visited 5 of the largest toy libraries over there, some of them having 3 times our membership and toy base. I looked at their lay-out, processes and ideas to work more efficient, serve their community better and their toy management.

(Talking about toys, we have added 134 toys to our collection this year, worth over \$8k!)

As soon as I was back, we employed Patti, our second coordinator, to host our new session on Tuesday afternoons and be a back-up for me. I have to say having Patti on board this year was one of my highlights; it is so nice to share the load a bit more and take the odd day off!

Once into March, we all know what happened: Covid-19 started to spread in NZ and we all went into lockdown. I kept working throughout our 2.5 months closure and got a lot of jobs done that have been sitting on the back burner for the last few years. I was glad that so many of you had our toys at home to keep boredom at bay and we were able to cover the cost of our members subscriptions for that time. I also really appreciate the work that our committee has done over this tricky time in order to help me making decisions on operations once we were able to open up again.

This year we ran 4 great fundraisers: instead of our usual Quiz Night we had a Jingo night. We even had an online Bingo during Lockdown! Of course, we had our annual Book Sale (although it was touch and go for a while if we can go ahead). This proved to be the most profitable book sale we ever had so we are happy that we decided to give it a go. We also collaborated with the Men's Shed again and sold 18 mud kitchens.

We started to offer toys to Autism Connex' monthly playgroup and supported the dinner fundraiser for Motor Neuron Disease and the Women's Refuge walk-in Wardrobe.

Another way how we "spread the love further" is with our pay-it-forward- programm. Every time we receive a new grant, we donate a 3-month membership to either a family in need or to another charitable organisation who can then use it as they wish. We passed on vouchers to Pregnancy Help, Autism Connex, Taranaki Down Syndrome Associations and Women's Refuge this year. Let us know if you think of any other groups or people that we could help. This way, grant providers can be sure that we make the most of their help to create a flourishing community.

Speaking about flourishing: we are collaborating on a project called “Flourish”, where we aim to establish a community facility for our toy library and other child centered community groups here in New Plymouth. Imagine indoor and outdoor playground, café, parent education rooms, party hire rooms, cooking demo kitchen, all wheelchair and buggy accessible etc.! It is a long road to get there but we have a dedicated team working on it step by step. If you are interested to know more, talk to myself or just keep your ears open in early2021, we will go public 😊 Our website is www.flourishtaranaki.org.

Other notable successes this year are the Te Reo Maori project which saw lots of bilingual toys and signage arrive on our shelves and the article in the NZ Life & Leisure magazine in November.

And alongside all this, we kept on doing everyday business, lending well over 10000 toys to 170 members! We had 130 new families this year who have tried out the toy library. (The family with the most toys had 146 toys this year- the total value of the toys they ever borrowed is over 30k! You can see this value at the top of your receipt.)

All this work would not have been done without a huge amount of support!

A THANK-You to all our **REGULAR HELPERS** and ROSTERED MEMBERS! You are helping immensely and are very much appreciated! We love that you find a couple of hours in your week now and then to lend us a hand and could not do without you!

Also, a big THANK-You to our **AMAZING COMMITTEE and TRUSTEES**. They do this because of their love and passion for the toy library and their belief that it is invaluable for our community. Often done at the expense of family time or late at night when their children sleep.

Another big Thank-You goes out to all our **FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS SPONSORS!** Without your input the toy library would not be what it is now, and we would have to spend a lot more volunteer hours to make sure that our toy library will be around for lots more children in the future! Grants came from TSB Community Trust, The Mazda Foundation, NZ Lotteries, COGS, and the Southern Trust. Methanex helped with a large collection of books for the book sale. Other help was given by many different businesses and people, i.e. Graphix, Northgate Motor Lodge and the Men’s Shed. Your donations, grants and sponsorship are very much appreciated and make our toy library an attractive competitor to toy shops!

My last Thank-You goes out to **OUR MEMBERS!** You have been very supportive by being responsible with our toys and time, patient when needed, offering help on lots of occasions, thankful to our volunteers and telling others to come and join! Keep up the good work and let us know if you are ever interested in joining our team “behind the scenes”! We are sure that everybody has a talent they can use to make the Toy Library tick over nicely or even better! Our AGM (end of February) would be a perfect opportunity to check us out!

To everybody out there, I wish you a very Merry Christmas (if that’s what you celebrate), a great summer and a prosperous New Year! Go out and spend as much time with your loved ones as you can as this time and the memories you make are what keeps you going through tough times! Have fun playing, spend some time to reflect and focus on the important things!

I will hopefully see you back, refreshed and happy, in 2020!

Kind regards from Jana Dunnet.