



McKenzie Centre



# McKenziePlus

NEWSLETTER NO.11 2024 : Ngahuru / Autumn



## MCKENZIE CENTRE SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN THE WAIKATO FOR 40 YEARS!

We are very proud to have supported thousands of whānau help their tamariki realise their potential. Information about how we will celebrate this will be shared with you later in the year. Pencil 2 November 2024 into your calendar!

## STAFF CHANGES AT THE CENTRE

*Welcome to*

Michael McLaughlin, Early Intervention Teacher, has joined our team in April. Michael works full time and comes with a wealth of experience and knowledge that he has gained in his home country USA.

*Some words from Michael:*

Kia Ora Whanau,

My name is Michael McLaughlin and I am a newly hired Early Intervention teacher. I arrived in New Zealand in December 2022. Prior to joining the McKenzie team, I worked as an ECE Teacher in the Hamilton area to learn and adjust to the Early Childhood curriculum and processes here in New Zealand.

Before coming to New Zealand, I lived and worked in the United States as an Early Childhood Special Education teacher



[www.mckenziecentre.org.nz](http://www.mckenziecentre.org.nz)

for 14 years; being the lead teacher in a classroom of 15 three to five year olds; eight with special needs, and seven typically developing peers. I am thrilled to be returning to the Special Education space and working with the team here at McKenzie to support our tamariki and whānau.

*Chrissy Douglas,  
Speech Language Therapist,*

has returned from maternity leave. She will be working this term on Mondays and Tuesdays.



*Joanna McIlroy,  
Music Therapy student*

My name is Joanna, and I am a music therapy student completing my placement at McKenzie Centre.

I have the wonderful opportunity to spend a year with them, two days a week, to develop my skills as a music therapist.



Being part of the McKenzie Centre team has diversified the way I approach the use of music. The team has offered techniques from other therapy practices, tips on how to engage best with children, and they have supported my learning and development at every turn. I look forward to all the musicking fun ahead with the McKenzie team!

## *Farewell to*

Nicky Lia who has moved to a position at the Ministry of Education in Whakatane, Angela Li Calsi who has moved back to her role at the Ministry of Education and John Brooker, who has started a teaching position at Patricia Avenue Special School.

## WHAT IS MUSIC THERAPY?

Music Therapy New Zealand describes a music therapist as someone who “uses the special qualities of music in a shared relationship with their participants, to meet personal needs, support learning and promote healing and change.” It goes on to say that they “work with people of all ages and abilities with individuals and groups, and in many different settings.”

What do we do? Musicking! This can be interacting with music, listening, creating, or just being nearby. It’s all part of engaging with others in a musicking experience. Where can we use music? Everywhere! Pots and pans can become drums. A stick running along a fence line can be the rhythm to a made-up song. Rubber bands over an empty tissue

box becomes a guitar! Clapping hands or blowing a raspberry... You can even make waiting in the car a musicking moment to help them through the process of waiting.

Music has so many functions from being educational and fun, to exploring the sounds around them. What does a pole sound like when you tap it! Some songs talk about counting “how many monkeys jumping on the bed”, and some songs are about body parts “head, shoulders, knees and toes!” Music is ready and waiting to be the medium you choose to interact and engage with your young one. Try making up songs with funny



words or putting new words on top of a well-known tune! You can do it all. Repeating vocalisations from our children can be a great way to model communication and conversations. They say “ahh”, we say “ahh” in response! Echo what they have to say.

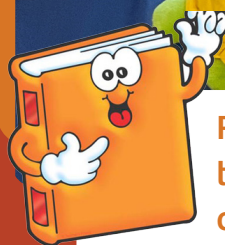
R.O.C.K. is a technique you can use at home to help with communication and engagement. Repeat, offer opportunities, Cue them, and Keep it simple! You can sing ‘Row, Row, Row your boat’ any time of the day – offering eye contact, body movement, physical closeness, and then in time allow them the space to fill in the missing word... like this:

“Row, row, row your...” Leave space and give them time. Any physical or vocal communication can indicate that they’re ready to carry on with the song.

Music is a tool that readily supports other therapies – speech language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, etc. You can do it in the home, in the car, in the supermarket, absolutely anywhere!

At McKenzie Centre, one of the ways we’re using musicking is to engage children in a routine (mat time) that they would find in an ECE. This musicking time is an opportunity to play with others in a shared meaningful experience. And as the parent/caregiver, you have the chance to model the activity and have connection with your child using musical instruments, funky dance moves and fun songs! Dance to the hello song, ring bells to twinkle, twinkle little star, point to your head, shoulders, knees and toes! It’s all building on what they can do and what they are learning to do.

By Joanna



Research shows that musicking together with your child can help with communication, eye contact, shared attention on a task, and joint play, to name a few. Music can also help children stay “on-task” for longer periods of time.



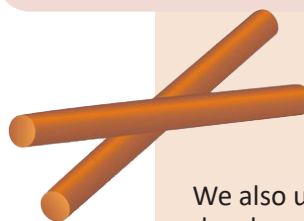
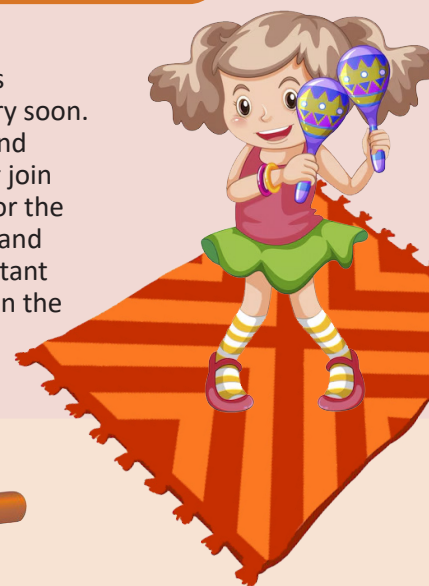
## MUSIC ENRICHMENT STORIES FROM MCKENZIE CENTRE

### Aaron & Vincent's Story

Music has been a way of keeping Vincent’s attention for longer periods. It has helped him with his language as he has picked up words and in the last few weeks he has begun to sing songs. At bedtime he gets fussy because HE wants to sing the song and not us! He has about 10-12 different songs. As a dad, this has been such a lovely surprise because I didn’t know he had that ability.

Music has been another tool to increase Vincent’s communication and for me to practice strategies to help him learn. I naturally use the OWL technique (observe, wait, listen) so I deliberately pause so Vincent can finish off the end of a song. For example; “Twinkle, twinkle little....” I also use our music time to practice being face to face and signing. It is also the perfect time to practice routines and feed in language. At music we have a tidy up song, and we use this at home to tidy up our toys at the end of the day too.

One of our children is heading to school very soon. This girl has autism and music has helped her join in at mat time, stay for the whole music session and request songs. Important skills for her to have in the school-based setting.



We also use music to develop motor skills. One child is using the clave (sticks) to practice his grasp and making great progress holding them and tapping them on the floor.



## MUSIC WITH LINDA, TUAKANA

I started helping with music at McKenzie Centre when I attended with my son Stan. Music was the highlight of the session for Stan! Initially we couldn't get him to participate as he just wanted to continue playing – but gradually, with encouragement, it became part of his routine here. And he LOVED it, and still does. I find that now, aged 9, we rely on music to soothe him in transitions, and to entertain him. He has a BIG spotify playlist! Stan is mostly non-verbal but he 'sings' songs, often including words or sounds of words in the right place, and nearly always copying the rhythms beat for beat.

Now that I work at McKenzie Centre, I love doing the music sessions. We have an ever-growing repertoire, but I try to do songs that the children know as well, and songs that will keep them engaged. I try to find out what songs they particularly like, either from their ECE or home.

It is wonderful to see the children growing through music. They learn a lot through the collaboration aspect of music (e.g. tidying up together, sharing out the instruments, sitting in a circle) as well as the learning that comes through creating the sounds and doing the actions. I think it ticks a lot of the Te Whare Tapa Whā boxes too (holistic health) .. being great for our mental, physical, emotional health, and so good for our soul too!



## A BIG THANK YOU TO ONE OF OUR REGULAR FUNDERS - WEL ENERGY TRUST!



We would like to acknowledge and thank WEL Energy Trust and the support given to McKenzie Centre for over 25 years.

**For the past 13 years a portion of their annual grant has contributed to our Psychology support for our whānau.**

The services of a psychologist were put in place at McKenzie Centre in response to an identified need from both parents and staff. It is vital to have a professional psychologist available for whānau who are struggling with their children's complex behaviour challenges, as well as their own grief and depression, in many instances. This type of stress can have a profoundly limiting effect on health and well-being and their daily lives as well as on their tamariki. While all our early intervention team are able to give guidance to our families, it is essential they have timely access to the specialist input and advice of a trained and experienced psychologist. WEL Energy Trust's grants have enabled us to extend this service to reach even more whānau thereby making a positive difference in many people's lives.

“(We love) Being able to access support and expertise from Richard the psychologist.”

“We are so grateful for the help and support from our key worker and psychologist at McKenzie Centre.”

### FEEDBACK FROM FAMILIES

“Coming to McKenzie Centre has been a breath of fresh air in our journey. Before coming here, we felt a bit helpless and hopeless, but here we have a team of people, (staff, and other families) surrounding us with support and guidance. We are so grateful for the help and care we get here.”

“I cannot say enough about McKenzie Centre, it's a God send! Because of this centre my husband and I are more confident as parents. McKenzie Centre removes isolation and builds confidence and you cannot ask for more than that!”





## INTRODUCING: CLAIRE VAN DER MOST OUR NEW MCKENZIE CENTRE TRUSTEE

### **1. What motivated you to join our trust as a trustee?**

I previously worked in a leadership role at Community Living Trust, so I've been aware of the work of

McKenzie Centre for a number of years, and the great reputation it has. With my governance and disability sector experience, I'm keen to support the Trust to continue its great work – supporting tamariki and whānau/families.

### **2. When did you join McKenzie Centre Trust?**

I joined in January 2024.

### **3. Can you share any personal experiences or values that align with our trust mission, or goals?**

From a personal perspective, I grew up in a small Northland town and a guy, Ian, lived across the road. He was about 20 years older than my brother and me and had an intellectual disability. He lived at home with his parents and worked at the local Four Square, which my brother and I also did, during school holidays and weekends. It wasn't until much later that I reflected on the situation and realised that we all respected Ian for who he was, what he was really good at, supported him like he supported us - at the things we weren't so good at, all with plenty of laughter and banter. He was Ian. Not Ian with a disability. One of the team. Nothing more, nothing less.

In terms of work, I started my career in Human Resources. The essence of all the roles I've had were focused on supporting people to be their best, at work. This included setting performance expectations – both in terms of 'what' team members did and 'how' they did it. It involved training and coaching and developing a great workplace culture centred on respecting each person and what they bring. It also involved working with a lot of people (colleagues, team members, stakeholders, and clients/customers), and demonstrating genuine care for them.

These all align with McKenzie Centre Trust's mission – realising potential; the values of care, respect, and partnership; and the strategic goals of Te Aranga (Structure), and He Tangata (People) in particular. The third strategic goal of Te Kotahitanga (Sustainability) for me is about focusing on the needs of the people we serve, and responding to those needs by being adaptable and prepared to try something new.

### **4. What aspect of our work do you find the most compelling/interesting?**

The Early Intervention and Behaviour Support aspects are most compelling to me. Early intervention because it's about establishing a plan, early in a child's life. Their formative years. A pathway to supporting them to be their best.

In terms of behaviour support – it's about understanding that all forms of behaviour are communication and I have seen first-hand how understanding that can make a huge difference for both the child and whānau/family. I also love all the sensory elements at the centre – I'm a tactile and visual person and imagine these items are all very well used by the children.

### **5. What do you see as the biggest challenges or opportunities facing our trust and how do you think we can address them?**

Whilst a lot of people are aware of McKenzie Centre Trust, there are a large number of people who might not be. I didn't know until recently we provide training for people other than those who are already connected to the centre through their children. So, raising the profile of the Trust is important. And, as with most For Purpose organisations, funding is always a challenge. Thinking creatively about what we currently do; considering what we aren't yet doing and could be; and looking for opportunities to streamline things so more of the team's time is spent with the children and whānau/families is key too.

### **6. Have you been involved in similar organisations in the past and if so, what did you find most rewarding about those experiences?**

I have and continue to work in a number of For Purpose organisations.

As mentioned earlier, I worked at Community Living Trust for nearly eight years and am aware of the opportunities and challenges facing similar organisations, and the positive difference they, through their team, can make in the lives of disabled people and their whānau/family.

Currently I work at Hamilton Multicultural Services Trust as executive chair – supporting migrants and refugees to settle successfully here in Kirikiriroa, Hamilton. And I'm a trustee on a number of other boards, including Enrich Group.

The most rewarding part of all these roles is about supporting and empowering people from all walks of life, to thrive.

### **7. What qualifications do you bring to the organisation?**

I have a Master of Social Science and a Post-Graduate Certificate in the Practice of Psychology from The University of Waikato and am a Chartered Member of the Institute of Directors.

### **8. When did you join Enrich Group Trust?**

I joined Enrich Group in June 2023.





# AUTISM GROUPS

Enrich+ offers four small-group sessions catering to autistics and those with Asperger's for ages five to 25 years.

Through games, activities and discussion, we assist with important life skills such as:

- < Social & Communication Skills >
- < Building Friendships >
- < Increasing Independence >

Visit the Enrich+ website  for more information: [ENRICHPLUS.ORG.NZ](http://ENRICHPLUS.ORG.NZ)



There are a fresh lot of workshops and events on offer throughout each term.

**VIEW OUR WEBSITE EVENTS PAGE [HERE](#)** 

Kia hora te marino, kia whakapapa pounamu te moana, kia tere te kārohirohi i mua i tō huarahi.

May peace be widespread, may the sea glisten like greenstone, and may the shimmer of light guide you on your way.

## THANKS SO MUCH TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS AND SPONSORS.

We are very grateful to the many people and organisations that support McKenzie Centre and the work we do. We could not do it without you!

