



Aspire Kiwi Youth Development

**2017
Programme
Report**

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Summary

For over a decade, youth workers of The Salvation Army had been facilitating a range of youth development programmes with young people across Aotearoa. In 2014 they gathered to seek collaboration and conciliation of what made quality youth development programmes work for young people. The result of this was 'Aspire' and the opportunity to partner with the Warehouse Group who would fund in 2015 a now unified quality youth development programme, partnering with schools based on experience and evidence, "Aspire Kiwi Youth Development" was born.

Aspire had gained momentum from the one-year fund from the Warehouse Group in 2015. Seeking further partners became a priority if the programme was to survive beyond 2015. Thanks to significant partnerships with Jeff Farm and Warehouse Stationery, along with a number of smaller private donors, Aspire continues today with over 200 participants spread across Aotearoa.

2017 was again a proud achievement for both Aspire and The Salvation Army. There were 220 participants engaged in the programme from Whangarei to Christchurch, in weekly programmes with qualified and experienced youth development practitioners.

To ensure Aspire was continuing to be an effective tool for the care and development of kiwi young people, a comprehensive evaluation was completed to measure growth and development of each young person and gauge the effectiveness of each group and its facilitation. To gain this information participants were asked a range of questions to measure the growth they had observed at the completion each module or term. The modules being that of the guiding theory of the Circle of Courage: Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity. Further evaluation was completed on the importance of both the adventure component at The Salvation Army Blue Mountain Adventure Centre and the community project task.

Across all 30 key measures we saw good percentage improvements. The most significant growth theme that emerged was in self-efficacy: where young people could identify growth in confidence, skill identification and where they fit in school, community and home.



Evidence-Informed Approach

Circle of Courage

Aspire is founded on good youth development and evidence that informs it. The Circle of Courage was developed by Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg and Leslie Du Toit in Indigenous American settlements and post-apartheid South Africa. The model is based on four developmental stages: Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity. Each school term is allocated one of these stages as a module with a minimum of eight associated sessions. Additional adventure component aligned to Mastery and the community project to Generosity. Individual sessions are designed to facilitate growth of skills that reflect the developmental stage. The Circle of Courage is effective yet simple to articulate, which has assisted in strong buy-in from schools, families and young people across Aotearoa.

Experiential Learning

Each individual session has a developed sequence of activities to facilitate development of the participants and the group. This approach is founded on David Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle and from what is widely referred to as 'activity-based learning'. This approach to the programme means our youth development workers facilitate activities and learning moments rather than instruct knowledge. This is followed by a process of reflection of what happened, why did it happen, what can we do about it or how does this relate to another context (home, classroom, peers).

Participation

Increasing the level of positive participation of young people at home, school and in the community is at the core of Aspire. This value is inspired and measured against Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation, which argues that without genuine participation and ownership by participants, limited transfers of learning will take place. Each session is sequenced to encourage this and facilitators are always looking for where participants can lead, contribute or make decisions. This is best reflected in the community project that is planned and implemented by the participants during the generosity module.

ASPIRE COMPONENTS

- Aspire is a 30–35 week programme.
- Weekly 1.5 hour sessions in partnership at the school. Sessions follow adventurebased learning sequence.
- 4 Modules: Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity.
- 3–4 day adventure experience at The Salvation Army Blue Mountain Adventure Centre.
- 2 Family engagement events.
- Community project component.
- Graduation night with school and whānau.
- Access and referral of young person and whānau when appropriate, to additional Salvation Army services (welfare, social work, housing, counselling, youth groups and churches).
- Qualified youth development workers.



2017 Aspire Landscape

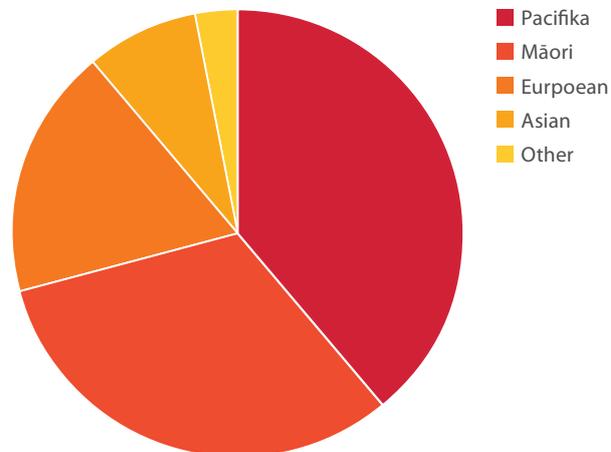
Aspire 2017 has seen 220 participants of diverse backgrounds meeting in schools across rural and urban Aotearoa as north as Whangārei and as south as Christchurch. 30% of groups were facilitated in Auckland but just as many in rural and smaller towns with very similar success.

The ethnic make-up of each group varied but reflected our modern and diverse country. The locations relied on where The Salvation Army had trained youth development practitioners who could implement the programme.

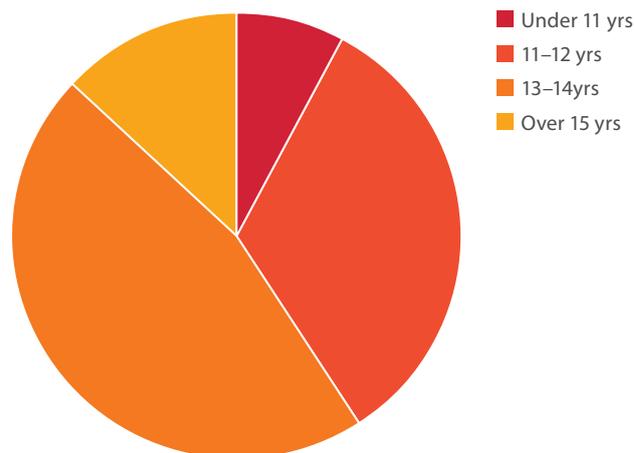
The selection of participants varied from site-to-site. Schools who participated as partners were key to advising selection of participants. Students identified to participate in groups were primarily chosen based on a need for additional investment, high risk factors or untapped potential. Participants were often selected because of challenges happening outside of school.



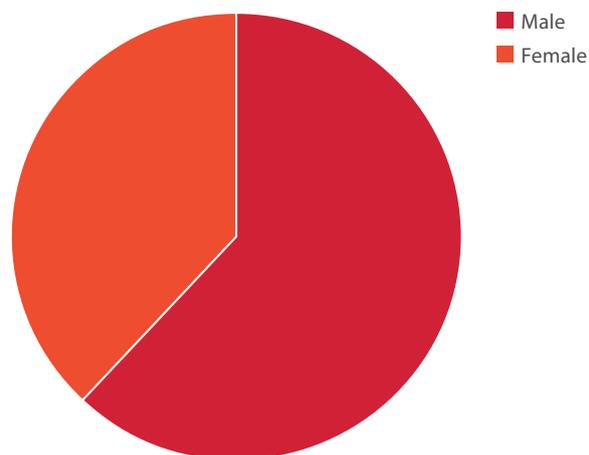
Participant Ethnicity



Participant Age Range



Participant Gender



Our Partners

Financial Partners

Warehouse Stationery has continued to be the primary financial partner since the 2015 Warehouse Group start-up funding. In 2017, Warehouse Stationery contributed 60% of the total raised funds.

Jeff Farm, which is run by The Salvation Army and raises funds for programmes for at-risk youth, is Aspire's second-most significant financial partner. In 2017 Jeff Farm contributed 25% of the total raised funds.

The remaining funds were raised by private donors in response to a targeted Christmas appeal.

Along with our two major donors, we would like to thank all the other sponsors for their contribution.

School Partners

Intermediate and high schools across Aotearoa have partnered again with Aspire, with a common purpose to see young people reach their potential and develop holistically. Partnerships with schools are not taken for granted and considerable work is undertaken to ensure the programme aligns with, and benefits the school's educational and social needs. Aspire, whilst at a school, must fit with in with the policies, procedures and values of the school. Quality relationships have been built over a number of years in many schools in Aotearoa. We hope to continue these relationships into the future.

Blue Mountain Adventure Centre

The Aspire adventure component is effectively hosted and facilitated by The Salvation Army Blue Mountain Adventure Centre (BMAC). We acknowledge the professional, safe and quality service the BMAC team provides when groups attend.



Belonging

Having a sense of emotional connection to individuals or in groups is a primal human need. The teenage period is when many of these needs are tested, predominately by peers, mass media and significant adults. Feeling that their views and ideas are valued is important for a young person’s sense of wellbeing and self-worth. In addition to significant adults, constructive and compassionate groups like sports teams, clubs and peer groups provide a great context to develop positive interaction skills and confidence in one’s identity.

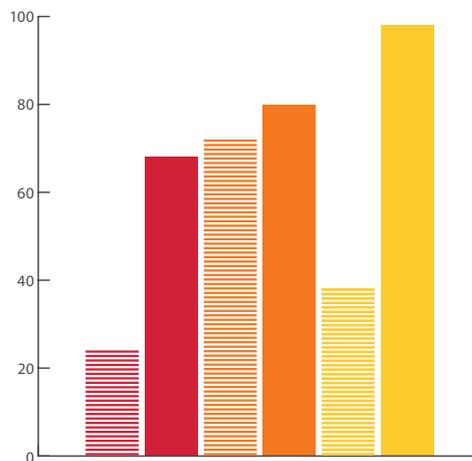
The Belonging Module is vital in the development of the group’s health long-term. Considerable effort is made to establish strong relationships which grow trust and transparency between participants and with facilitators. Topics covered in the Belonging Module include group formation, team work, trust, respect and support networks. A creative group contract is established as part of this module, which all participants contribute to and agree upon. When established well, the contract can be used throughout the year to reinforce values, set goals or to address challenges the group faces.

In the 2017 evaluation of belonging, there was a substantial increase in how young people felt noticed, and an increasing confidence in the value they add to their world. By the end of the module, 98% of participants believed that they were listened to at home and school—an increase of 38% from the beginning of the module. This was the same with participants who felt it was noticed if they weren’t around—from only 24% who felt this before the module, to 68% on completion. It is important to note that nothing may have changed in their context, yet their ability to identify where they belong had.

Each Aspire group provides, not only a learning space but a place where participants can feel safe, trust and contribute to each other. This group—although very real—acts as a safe place to practice such virtues. When asked if they felt safe sharing their ideas in the group and if they felt the facilitator genuinely cared for their wellbeing, participants more often than not, expressed a sense of growth. Additional work by facilitators to complete home visits to establish relationships with whānau was a contributing factor to this improvement.

Well-established groups with good intentions become breeding grounds for positive behaviour in other contexts.

Sense of Belonging



“People notice when I’m not around.”

- At the start of the module
- After completing the module

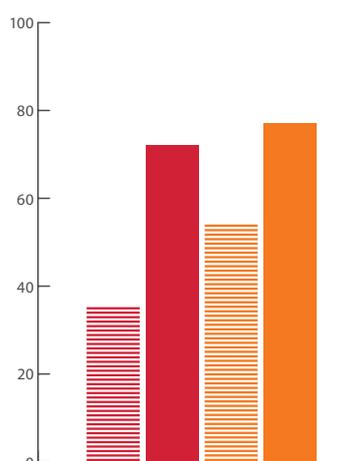
“I feel safe.”

- At the start of the module
- After completing the module

“People around me listen to what I say.”

- At the start of the module
- After completing the module

Sense of Belonging in the Group



Participant felt safe to share in the group

- At the start of the module
- After completing the module

Participant felt their facilitator genuinely cared

- At the start of the module
- After completing the module

Mastery

The development of mastery and competence in the context of Aspire—learning and mastering new skills—is a key part of positive youth development. When a young person can take pride in their competence in areas of strength, there is a willingness to learn new skills, and knowledge comes more naturally. Identifying existing mastered skills or talents provides a platform from which a young person can grow.

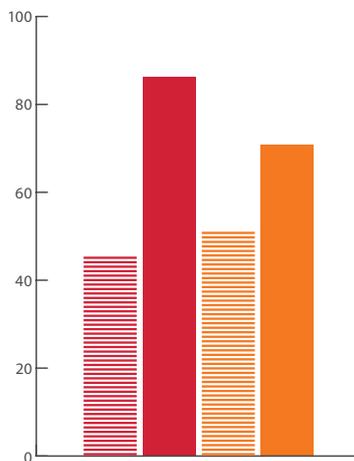
Topics covered in the Mastery Module include communication, self-control, creativity, self-esteem, goal-setting, peer support and problem-solving. Flexibility in the curriculum is given at this period of the programme to help facilitators identify meaningful skills or tasks that can be mastered. In 2017, we have seen groups use cooking, taiaha (traditional Māori weapon now a tool used for physical well being activities), music, craft and a range of other approaches, to ensure the development of mastery is relevant to the participants and where the facilitators are skilled.

Near the completion of the Mastery Module participants also attend an adventure experience at Blue Mountain Adventure Centre in the Tongariro National Park. The adventure experience assists in building confidence and willingness to attempt and achieve (master) tasks. This is a great transition to the independence module that follows.

Identifying skills and talents is the foundation from which participants can build assets. The evaluation of the Mastery Module identified that most young people had not yet identified what they were already good at, or had mastered. There was a 41% increase in participants noting that they now knew what they were good at. Further to this, a 20% increase in participants feeling a sense of pride in their talents or gathered skills.

For many, even seeing snow expanded their world-view enough to make the adventure experience worth the investment. The adventure experience provided a fast lane of development in participants. The need to trust their group, to push themselves physically and emotionally, whilst immersed into an environment and temperature so foreign, created experiences and memories which—both in the moment and on return—were so valuable to development of self and self-belief.

Skill and Talent



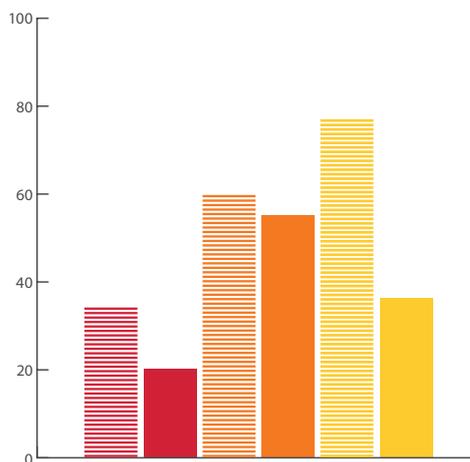
“I know what I am good at.”

- At the start of the module
- After completing the module

“I am proud of my skill and talent.”

- At the start of the module
- After completing the module

Resilience



“I give up easily if I don't know how, or it's hard.”

- At the start of the module
- After completing the module

“I am scared to fail.”

- At the start of the module
- After completing the module

“I worry about who is watching.”

- At the start of the module
- After completing the module

Independence

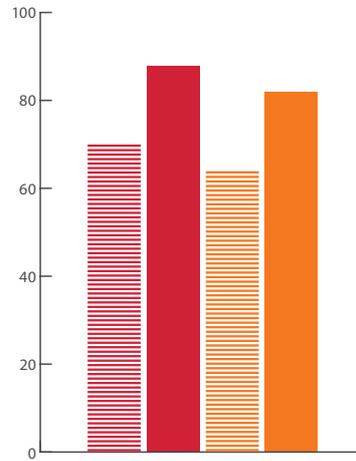
Young people need opportunities to develop self-sufficiency and ownership of their decisions. This is gained by giving young people opportunities to accept responsibility, and prove they are trustworthy. From this learning, young people develop the ability to positively self-manage their actions and make good choices. They learn how their decisions influence their future and the people around them.

Topics covered in the Independence Module include peer support, ko wai au (who am I), other people matter, goal-setting, adults that care, and making good decisions. Independence is closely linked to belonging, as the group provides a space for confidence to grow in one's self to be able to confidently and independently act and make decisions. High trust activities are used in this module to facilitate learning. Time is also spent on knowing who you are (ko wai au), what makes you, you—in interest, experience and DNA.

In an age where first time encounters or one-on-one conversations are happening more often through a form of media (cellphones through to Snapchat), confidence in trying new things and meeting new people has become something to fear for many in society. Although young people can have less prejudice, this fear is still common. The evaluation results noted positive increases in confidence in reaching goals, feeling in control of life and participants having a plan for their future. It is important to note that there was an important growth in participants identifying that they had a significant adult that knows their dreams. We are confident that in many cases this maybe an Aspire facilitator—if not a facilitator—they can identify such a person that knows their dreams or they have recently communicated them to.



Facing the Future



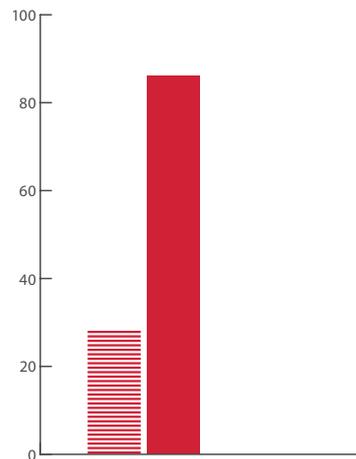
"I am in control of my life."

- ▨ At the start of the module
- After completing the module

"I have a plan for the future."

- ▨ At the start of the module
- After completing the module

Dreams and Aspirations



"I have someone in my life who knows my dreams and aspirations."

- ▨ At the start of the module
- After completing the module

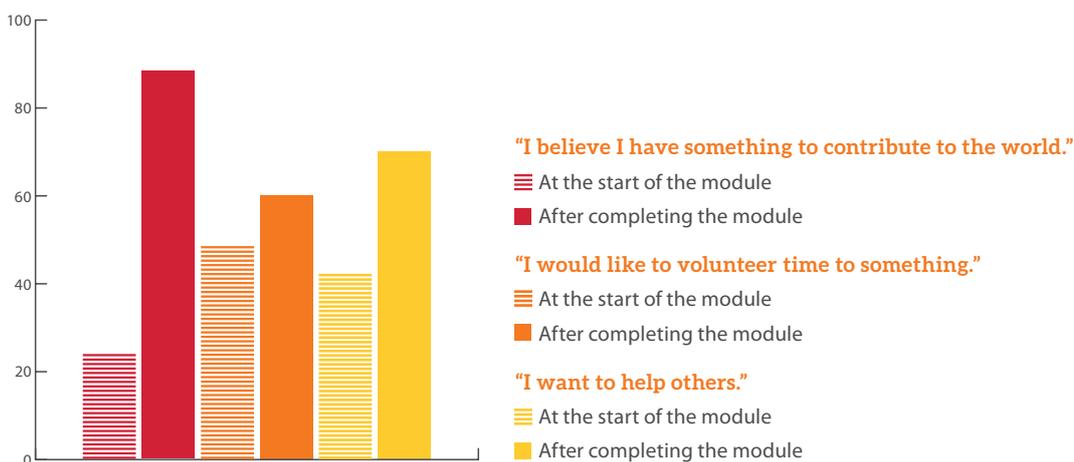
Generosity

Young people need opportunities to engage in helpful and thoughtful activities. Most evident in indigenous communities, contribution to the ‘other’ is at the foundation blocks of society and is the core value that breeds positive behaviour. By helping young people contribute to others—especially within their regular context—is an important step on the road to contributing to society as an adult and will develop belonging in both them and those they serve.

Topics covered in the Generosity Module include globalisation, the environment, my home, helping others, needs of a community and giving is receiving. The core of the Generosity Module is based on supporting the participants to put into action what they have learnt through all four modules, by completing a community project. The act of generosity is built from the self-confidence of the programme, chosen by the group and often reflects the journey they have taken. The 2017 projects included culture nights, murals, rubbish removal, feeding the homeless, repurposing timber pallets into furniture, packing food parcels, planting trees and more.

After the completion of their community project, groups from across Aotearoa reported back with great success. Most obvious in the evaluation was participants acknowledging that they actually could make a difference in the lives of others, even though they may be young, short of resources and lacking confidence. What this reinforced is the notion that young people, when given opportunity, genuinely want to contribute and are often not scared with preconceived prejudice or shame. The pure creativity is inspiring.

Generosity



COMMUNITY PROJECT FEEDBACK

‘In New Plymouth, we did a clean-up of the bush close to a school that had a whole lot of rubbish dumped in it. The boys thought it would be a great project to do because they have to walk past it every day to-and-from school. They didn’t like the fact there was so much rubbish in there and that it could impact on how some people might view the school. Eight big bags of rubbish were removed from the bush.’

New Plymouth Facilitator

‘Our group decided they wanted to help homeless people, as there are many in our community. They decided they wanted to make food parcels and hygiene packs to be distributed out to families and homeless people. Along with the support of the Manukau foodbank, they made 50 food parcels and over 100 hygiene packs. The young people also learnt more about the issue of homelessness through the tour of The Salvation Army’s Manukau Community Ministries.’

Manukau Facilitator

‘Our girls group decided to collect items and backpacks for homeless women. They also did research on the need for assistance with women’s sanitary items and health services, particularly for homeless women. We then dropped the bags off to the Auckland City Mission.’

Mt Albert Facilitator

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