

Cultural Celebration Award Entrant: TerraNova Homes and Care



A common goal to unite, educate, see and experience a unique and iconic part of New Zealand and raise funds for a good cause resulted in The TerraNova Hikoī - an initiative to support the multicultural workforce of TerraNova Homes and Care and partner organisations.

At the beginning of 2015, aged care provider TerraNova Homes and Care set a goal to hold an annual fundraiser to support one or more partner organisations within the healthcare community. Many of these partners are charitable entities (e.g. Hospice), offering services that are reliant on community donations.

The first annual charity and cultural event, conceived at an informal staff function, took place on 23-25 November 2015. It was called the TerraNova Tongariro Hikoī.

A team of 36 TerraNova personnel from each of the five TerraNova North Island locations, stayed two nights at the Otūkōu Marae (hosted by the Ngāti Tuwharetoa iwi), and trekked across Tongariro on a 19.4km trail with a guide who advised them on the cultural importance of the landscape.

This was an entire company fundraiser. Some walked, but all staff were participants. The hikoī included everyone from caregivers, registered nurses, household staff and clinical coordinators, right through to facility managers and members of the head office and executive management team. Residents also took on the challenge - they raised funds and were very much part of the journey.

The business objectives of the initiative included raising money for a partner charity. The final total of \$10,000 was donated to five local hospices in the North Island. Cultural diversity and team building were equally important, with the hikoi providing a strong focus on Māori culture and an opportunity to learn more about tangata whenua and diversity. This focus emphasized the importance of delivering culturally appropriate care, and created the chance for all personnel, ranging from caregivers to the board of directors, to come together as equals. Being in the business of caring, the organisation also wanted to promote wellbeing amongst staff.

With a multicultural staff of 250, many earning the minimum wage and most not having journeyed outside their regions of work, there was an opportunity to bring everyone together. Very few had ever had the opportunity to spend time on a marae or experience the warm, hospitality and welcome extended by the tangata whenua at their communal home.

Due to demographic and geographic limitations, the TerraNova Homes and Care 'family' as a whole has experienced a degree of disparity in the past – with separate locations under the one umbrella, and employees representing a wide range of ethnicities. It had been a logistical challenge to create a feeling of cohesiveness and 'oneness'.

"The TerraNova Tongariro Hikoi has helped to change this," says chief executive Gabby Clezy.

"It brought our workforce together for a shared purpose, and the time on the marae was a chance for people from many different cultures and backgrounds to be exposed to the Māori culture. They got to live, work and sleep together. There was a newfound respect for the Māori culture plus they found that people saw more similarities rather than differences between each other.

The initiative was seeded by the chief executive and a small team of senior managers but, from the moment the decision was made that a hikoi was possible, it became a fabulous team building event and took on a life of its own.

The company donated the majority of the cost of staging the hikoi with the walkers being asked to contribute \$80 towards the three-day marae stay and crossing and to fundraise \$200 each. A fund was made available by TerraNova for any staff who could not afford the \$80 contribution. All funds raised for the hikoi were donated to the Hospice local to each of our five facilities. The fundraising and training events were also enjoyed by all staff and residents.

As a direct result of the hikoi, cultural events and celebrations have increased across all TerraNova branches.

Diversity is celebrated and supported at Terra Nova and through initiatives such as the TerraNova Tongariro Hikoi, along with the other regular events, employees are encouraged to bring their unique skills, experiences and perspectives to work, which in turn allows them to better connect with colleagues and clients, gain greater job satisfaction, and provide a truly person-centred service.

By recognising, appreciating and actively acknowledging what individual staff members

bring to the table, there has been a quantifiable rise in staff retention rates and satisfaction levels, with lower than average staff turnover rates, and a three per cent increase in staff satisfaction between April and November 2015.

“We have seen a bonding of staff within each facility and across the company,” says Gabby.

“Our staff, who came from many cultures found that they had more in common with each other than differences. Race, colour, religion and role did not matter as we respected each other for the talents and strength shown to raise a considerable amount of money and undertake a challenging trek.

“Our residents come to us in the same way we came to the marae. Strangers who are apprehensive and heading towards a difficult journey. The concern and understanding extended to us by our hosts is a reminder and a template of how we must treat our residents,” says Gabby.

Here is some of the feedback from the staff involved.

“I had only moved to New Zealand 8 months before embarking on this journey. What a fascinating and heart-felt experience. Meeting and learning about all the many different cultures and nationalities within TerraNova was so uplifting and emotional. To hear all the personal stories of each individual. We all seemed to have the same passions and goals. It was truly a humbling experience I will never forget.” Stacey Antonie, Personal Assistant - South African

“Hei manaakitanga.....” It’s all about the embracing and caring of the manuhiri (visitors). The spiritual acceptance and growth that I witnessed from each of the manuhiri as they became part of the tangata whenua (local people) was very touching and I enjoyed sharing this part of the Māori culture with everyone. A learning for all of us.

“My one line quotation would be “Nā tō rourou, nā tōku rourou, ka ora ai tātou katoa”. Literally meaning: “With your basket and my basket, we shall all survive!” My preferred translation, “With the sharing of our resources, we will all prosper!” Eva Simmonds - Monte Vista, Facility Administrator, Taupo