

# Cultural Celebration Award Winner:

## Elizabeth Knox Home & Hospital

Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/104979384>

Dedicated to changing the face of residential care.

Irish immigrants Elizabeth and Charles Knox settled in Auckland in the early 1840s. When Elizabeth died in 1908 at the ripe old age of 99, she bequeathed her estate for the “purpose of building, endowing and maintaining a hospital or home for poor people suffering from incurable diseases”.

The Knox Home Trust Board was established in 1911 and the facility was originally constructed on the Knox farm in Tamaki. In 1974 the new home relocated to its current location in Epsom, Auckland. The Elizabeth Knox Home and Hospital (EKHH) now provides care to both subsidised and fee-paying private residents. Both the young and old have made Knox their home.

The Knox community is extremely diverse; over 26 nationalities are represented amongst the residents, and 17 nationalities amongst the 123 staff members. Collectively, 23 different languages are spoken. The volunteering community of around 600 regular monthly volunteers, vital in an environment with so much emphasis on companionship and one-to-one communication, includes 47 different nationalities with around 50 different languages.

The EKHH is New Zealand’s only fully registered Eden Alternative™ home, offering a philosophy of care that aims to eliminate the ‘three plagues’ of loneliness, helplessness and boredom that are often present in aged and residential care facilities. They do so by creating a resident-centered community filled with variety and spontaneity, close and continuous relationships with staff and the opportunity for residents to give as well as receive care.

The values of the organisation revolve around the Eden Alternative™ Ten Principles, also the principles of partnership with Maori, celebrating and honouring the cultural diversity of the Knox family. In alignment with these principles, the values of ‘community’ or whanau within the Knox family residents, their families, workers and the significant volunteer contingent allow for direct connections with the community at large.

EKHH works to encourage cultural diversity within the workforce through their active recruitment of global talent, promoting significant volunteer engagement within the wider community and embracing large numbers of migrant workers.

One key initiative works with skilled migrant workers who are waiting for relevant certification and New Zealand registration before they can practice in their chosen field.

“EKHH takes on trained and registered overseas nurses, hiring them as care partners pending New Zealand registration. The purpose of this is to ensure individuals have opportunity to improve employment and earning potential and can gain valuable New Zealand experience, knowing that they will have job prospects upon completion of their registration,” says...  
Andrea Sy and Jun Singson are both registered nurses from the Philippines and former EKHH health care assistants. While waiting for their New Zealand registration to be

completed, they were able to gain valuable work experience and the confidence necessary to succeed. EKHH did all that they could to support their personal and professional growth, and to make the transition to New Zealand as easy as possible for both Andrea and Jun and their families. Within a year of being employed as a healthcare assistant at EKHH, Andrea was able to be employed as a registered nurse.

The volunteer community is also a valuable asset to EKHH, and their relationship with the staff and residents of the home is very much a holistic one. Volunteers at EKHH include individuals of all ages and backgrounds; the youngest is only 13 years of age and the eldest volunteer to date is 77 years young. Over 70% of the volunteers are migrants to New Zealand with English as a second language, adding to the multi-lingual environment at the home.

In one recent EKHH survey, responses to the question "Why do you volunteer at EKHH?" revealed the top three motivating factors for volunteers; social contact, giving to the community and fun. Other reasons also included gaining experience, English practice and having something to do. It is apparent that the residents and staff of EKHH give back to the community just as much as the community gives to the residents.

EKHH resident Max Pemberton says, "I thoroughly enjoy and like Elizabeth Knox. It has a unique feel with respect to volunteers. I thoroughly enjoy speaking with all the volunteers here and get a great deal of satisfaction from encouraging them. Especially the foreign students. I encourage them with their education. They are lovely people with big hearts and it's obvious. It gives me so much satisfaction seeing them smile when I encourage them. It's a unique program and I enjoy seeing them grow."

2014 has been quite a year for EKHH and its CEO Jill Woodward, a recent recipient of the Nancy Fox Award for outstanding leadership. The home also achieved full registration as an Eden Alternative™ home - the first in New Zealand - a goal they had been working towards since adopting the Eden Alternative Principles in 2009.

Over the past five years, there has been evidence of higher levels of spontaneity, increased care and family engagement at the home. Animals, plants and children have a positive influence on the residents. At the same time, the wider community of staff, volunteers, family and friends are becoming increasingly involved in daily life at EKHH, which is clearly much more than a home for the elderly.