

## Grandparents raising Grandchildren awareness



From Monday 20 March until Saturday 26 March, is Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Awareness Week. This allows the not for profit organisation, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust New Zealand, let families know that there is a charity accessible to them that provides nationwide support services specially dedicated to the cause. In Franklin there are currently 133 grandparent families registered with the charity, who are raising 243 grandchildren. However, Waiuku Coordinator for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, Luana Misa, believes that there are far more families out there in this situation, who do not know that there is support and assistance available to them. “It really is an epidemic that is taking hold of our generation. The majority of families we work with have seen the grandparents take on the role as caregivers due to a traumatic event or family breakdown where there has been serious issues with the parents. “ “A recent survey has shown that it is often due to drugs and/or alcohol abuse, violence, neglect, mental illness, imprisonment or death of one or both parents.” Since the beginning of January 2017, Luana explained that nine families have joined the Franklin branch, which is a massive increase compared to the 16 that joined for the whole of 2016. Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust carried out a major survey in 2016 with over 1100 of their registered caregivers. From the study, it was shown that the top reason (in 53% of cases) of why children go into grandparent care is because of the parent’s drug abuse. The only drug cited by participants in the research was methamphetamine. It was also shown in last year’s research that the average number of children each grandparent family is raising are 1.8 children. In Papakura/Franklin, around half are raising one child, while 38 percent are raising two children and 11 percent are raising between three and six children. “Just being in this situation is hard enough, however, some of these granparents are raising children as single caregivers. We even have great-grandparents raising their great-

grandchildren. Our purpose is to provide support services to these grandparents, to help protect and promote the well-being and development of children in their care.” One way of helping these families is by giving them new member caregiver packs. These are couriered to all new members, and in some cases additional care packs include clothing and bedding for families in need.

“Particularly when children arrive with nothing but the clothes they are in or because of drug contamination. Toys, clothes and bedding which has been donated is also sent out to them when it is available. Each new member pack includes our GRG Handbook which has lots of information on financial support and the legal process. Any bit of awareness and donations help towards this ever growing cause.” To donate or find out more about Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust and their monthly local support groups, visit [www.grg.org.nz](http://www.grg.org.nz) Waiuku Coordinator for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, Luana Misa, is raising awareness of an ‘epidemic’ that she believes is increasing in the community.