

# What's been **happening** at **Ozanam House**



A unique style of 'home away from home' accommodation for out-of-town guests undergoing treatment at Palmerston North Hospital's Regional Cancer Centre

SUMMER 2015

## Farewell Administrator Extraordinaire Eileen Day...

**Administrator... a bland word that displays little soul or comfort in its saying, the complete opposite of the woman who has held this unenviable position at Ozanam House for the past 22 years.**

Back in 1992 Eileen Day retired 'for good' (or so she says) from a career in District Nursing. Whilst holidaying in Australia, a thoughtful ex-colleague put her name forward for 'this job she thought I'd like' at Ozanam House. She was interviewed, came in for a look on a Thursday and by the following Monday was sitting in the Administrator's chair (back then in the Walden Wing) wondering what the heck she'd got herself into.

After admitting to a 'bit of floundering about' for the first month, Eileen soon found her feet. She put her mark on the job and teamed up with former Trust Secretary, Tony Finnigan, to help grow Ozanam House into what you see today. It has expanded from 36 beds in 1992 to 70, with new accommodation wings and new systems added to accommodate guests' needs. Eileen became part-interior designer, part law-enforcer, part camp-mother and woman of many trades. "No two days were the same" she says, something that has obviously kept her inspired on the job: "I always waited for the morning that I didn't want to get up and go to work... but it never came."

There's many tales that Eileen could tell. Like the one about the arrival of the new computer bed-booking system in the mid-1990s: "I spent all Easter weekend learning how to use it - that poor chap in Greymouth who sold us the programme... I think I rang him every 5 minutes for the first day!" Or her most horrible moment on the job: when she returned from holiday in 2007 to find there had been a fire in the Summers Wing. "I couldn't have been more upset" she says, "we had just done it up and I felt it as keenly as if it had been my own home."

Never one to shy away from what needs saying, Eileen is held dear by many who have travelled the roads that lead to Ozanam House. Often referred to as 'Camp Mother' or 'Mother Duck', Tony Finnigan who originally



employed her for her common-sense approach says: "It soon became obvious that Ozanam House was Eileen Day and that Eileen Day was Ozanam House."

Eileen's light-but-caring tone and irreverent sense of humour has set the scene for a place that could easily be one to be endured rather than enjoyed: "I love people, my tongue though has got me into more trouble than anything else but I've always treated everyone equally, no airs and graces with me - never has been!" Her forthright manner is to the fore when asked to comment on the changes she's seen in her time: "Well I've greyer hair, a fatter backside and fatter fingers on the computer!"

So 'what's next'? Eileen ventures some comments about hoping to pick up motivation to do some things around the house. A house that is of necessity (due to the work hours she's kept over the years), been her husband's domain (Des, now retired 13 years). So no doubt there will be some adjusting to do with a new administrator coming on line on the home front!

## Adieu to Claire Murray

Eileen's very able 'offsider' Claire Murray also retired from her role early in 2014. A registered nurse, she came to Ozanam House for a change from working in a Doctor's surgery and was a familiar face for visitors and guests during the 8 years she was with us. Donna Dowse took over the role during 2014 and has also moved on, with Meg de Joux now taking her place.

*"I've been blessed with the women sent to administer the place, they have all been very fine!"*

Former Trust Secretary Tony Finnigan commenting on the highlight of his time at the helm back in 2011.



*Above: Eileen Day and Claire Murray*

## Ozanam House Trust

a home away from home

**Have you seen our new logo?** Proudly displayed on our street frontage signs, the new look signifies the 'caring hands' we extend to our guests as we welcome them into their 'home away from home' with us. The daffodil is the first flower of spring, its bright yellow blooms reminding us of the joy and hope a new season brings.

## The New faces at Ozanam House

In January Eileen Collins commenced the role of Administrator, together with assistant Meg de Joux.

Eileen, with a background in administration, training in counselling, complimentary health and nursing, is looking forward to continuing the goodwill and homely atmosphere provided to guests.

Meg with an administration background and paramedic degree is looking forward to a change in lifestyle from shift work.

Both have embraced the philosophy and purpose of the Trust and are looking forward to continuing the path that has been laid by those before them.



*Above: Eileen Collins and Meg de Joux*

### GUEST COMMENT

**Peter Airey** from Hastings

Four weeks into his six week stay at Ozanam House, this former farm manager has been pleasantly surprised at the facilities and amenities provided. "It really is a home away from home – you can mix in with folk or please yourself" he says. "Folks back home had let me know it existed before I came, and I just happen to be staying

in the same room in the Williams Wing that someone I know stayed in 14 years ago!" Undergoing combined radiation and chemotherapy treatment for bowel cancer, Peter has commuted back home to his beloved Jack Russell at weekends but has found everyone in his house "knocks along together easily". He is also quick to speak highly of the support offered by the very obliging ladies who run the place and "who offer us a bit of cheek on the side to help keep us cheerful!"



Bishop Cullinane (second from left) with distinguished Lions Club Members at the opening of the rejuvenated Lions Court. Built by a Christchurch company, the water sculpture shown is the result of a collaboration with Auckland artist Josh Paki. Of Māori and Croatian descent, the central Māori motif had special significance for Josh as his koro had recently battled with cancer. The motif references the compass directions and depicts the Puhuro, a Ngā Puhū design based on the form of a shark (which is a symbol of strength).

Since the 1970s, Lions have repeatedly helped raise funds to enhance our facilities for cancer patients (and their families) who hail from outlying areas. The latest Lions-funded addition is an extensive upgrade to the 'Lions Court', an outdoor courtyard at Ozanam House named in recognition of the original efforts of Lions Districts 202B and D in supporting the building of patient accommodation.

Clubs from Lions Districts 202D and M (which now includes the original 202B district) did not disappoint and funds for the \$30,000-plus upgrade flowed in from around the region.

202D Vice District Governor, Ash Hazlitt says: "For our clubs it's a facility we don't mind helping because, if we're honest, we don't really want to have to use it. But so many people we care about have needed Ozanam House during their treatment and it's a way for us to say 'thank you' for looking after our friends and families so well."

"We were overwhelmed by the response to our request for help with this project" says Trust Secretary Roger Clark, "and we thank our Lions contributors far and wide, large and small, for their donations. Your generosity has ensured our guests will enjoy many more pleasant respite hours outside - with the added benefits of new furniture, a water feature and outdoor chess set."

## Garden Craft



Volunteer gardener Rose Comber and husband Terry, along with long-term volunteer Norm Pearce and assistant Karen, do incredible work to keep the gardens

at Ozanam House in tip-top shape. They make a huge effort to ensure guests can contribute to the gardening if they wish, with guests often seen out working in the gardens on a fine day.

Rose, along with a volunteer draughtsman and landscape gardener, shaped up the garden design for the rejuvenated Lions courtyard: "In planning our design, we tried to put ourselves in the shoes of those who would be using it" says Rose, "we wanted it to be a homely place, somewhere people could relax and be quiet and, if they felt like it, have a little dig around in the garden themselves."

## GUEST COMMENTS

### A 'wonderful environment'

**Robin**, a guest from Napier, recently sent us a note with some heart-warming feedback:

"I just thank the wonderful staff I met. Marleen, Roger, Kay. They treated me with complete friendship and dignity. I was not treated like a paying guest, it was more like a family member and lifelong friend. I am very

grateful. I left with mixed emotions. I was glad to be going home and at the same time, saddened that I was leaving. I could easily have stayed a lot longer. Ozanam House made it possible for me to receive my treatment and recover in a wonderful environment, and for that I will always be grateful."



### Ian and Eleanor Holyoake from Napier

"We shared the common feeling of trepidation that most new guests have" says retired Assistant Police Commissioner Ian Holyoake of he and his wife Eleanor's first drive over from their home on the outskirts of Napier. "Although we'd talked to a few people who'd used the facility, and we'd popped in for a look when I first came over for a CT/MRI, we weren't really sure what we were getting into." As a former campground proprietor and proud owner of a big 5th wheeler caravan, Ian was tempted to camp nearby when he knew he'd have to spend time in Palmerston North. He soon realised that if his cancer treatment rendered him unable to drive, Eleanor would be left with the unenviable task of trying to manoeuvre their big V8 truck about town to get him

to appointments. "It just wasn't an option" he said.

The option that these well-travelled guests took up of using the "smart motel-like" accommodation at St Mary's has "made a difficult task incredibly easy" says Ian. "We felt like we'd been upgraded to business class!" Three weeks into his eight week radiation treatment and with no side effects as yet limiting his driving, he's still very glad they left the 5th wheeler at home: "It's a place filled with friendship and the fellowship of others suffering similar ailments."

Instead of the 'big C', Ian talks of the three important little c's of Ozanam House: the fact it is so convenient, close to the hospital and brim full of camaraderie.

# Dan Butler

## A man with a vision

Dan Butler's passing in 2013 was a sad day for Ozanam House for it marked the end of an era. For many years Dan was an active member of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Back in 1966 he was part of a group that conceived the idea of a 'home away from home' for out-of-town patients undergoing cancer treatment.

The story goes that Dan spoke to a patient from Gisborne who was upset at being separated from his family and could not afford to stay in Palmerston North whilst he was in hospital. Witnessing his loneliness spurred Dan to develop a vision for a homely accommodation facility where spouses and family could also stay free of charge, thereby alleviating the pain of separation. A vision that we strive to maintain in all that we do today.

2015 marks the 48th year that Ozanam House has offered accommodation and support to cancer patients in the MidCentral Regional Cancer Centre catchment areas of Taranaki, Hawkes Bay, Gisborne, Wanganui and Wairarapa and we'd like to thank all who, like Dan, have helped build our facility into the valued community resource that it is today.

*Right: Dan Butler (foreground) visiting his namesake 'Butler House' in May 2012 with Francis Yates and wife from Gisborne.*



## Thank you and Goodbye from Tairawhiti DHB

"I really miss them" says retiring Trust Administrator Eileen Day of her favourite East Coast house guests, "they were so bright, cheerful and grateful..."

East Coast patients undergoing cancer treatment are now sent to Hamilton for care rather than Palmerston North, and the Tairawhiti DHB Chief Executive penned us a very thoughtful thank you to mark the transition:

"The end of an era has arrived and Tairawhiti District Health joins with the Gisborne East Coast Cancer Society to thank you and your staff at Ozanam House for all the years of care and dedication provided to Tairawhiti patients with cancer and their families.

Some of the most frequent comments received from patients over the years have been the excellent level of care and compassion as well as the amazing welcome provided at Ozanam House. That you have been able to keep this high standard going for over 30 years is an impressive achievement for you and your staff.

The relationship that has developed over time between Ozanam House and our community has been one of trust and respect and on behalf of Tairawhiti we thank you again for your commitment to provide high quality care for our patients and their whanau."

*Jim Green, Tairawhiti Chief Executive*

## PROPERTY UPDATE

# Ozanam House Renovations



Ryan Wing rooms 1–6 and kitchen (left) have undergone a make-over to ensure they continue to provide comfortable, quality accommodation. Our guests are enjoying brand new kitchens, updated bedrooms and revamped furniture in the lounge areas. In the Urquhart Wing all showers have been renovated and a new kitchen installed. Lounge furniture is undergoing a refresh across the Williams Wing, Vincentian Cottage and Lloyd Morgan Wing – something we know our guests appreciate mightily.

## Ozanam House – New addition

In 2015 we are renovating several new houses that have been added to the wider complex in nearby Newhaven Place. Designed for use by individual family groups, our

aim is to be able to use these properties instead of our current rented Clendon Court family accommodation by the end of the year.

From our photo album

## BNZ Bark-Busters

Local BNZ 'Closed For Good' volunteers doing an awesome job 'mucking in' in our gardens last year.



### And some Final Words from our Visitor's Book:

"Staying at Ozanam House felt like my second home." – Napier Guest

"Peaceful, relaxing, lovely staff and good atmosphere." – New Plymouth Guest

"Home-like feeling. Loved the company. It is a delightful place." – Waipawa Guest

We gratefully acknowledge the rates relief our properties enjoy courtesy of:

