
Papakura Courier



Seven years ago Gaileen Thew asked Rosehill kids what they wanted in their community.

Late last month those kids' dreams of skateparks and basketball courts were finally realised.

The new skateboard bowl, courts and playgrounds are now open at Marybeth Reserve, with a flying fox set to be added later in the year.

The park was once considered unsafe, being shielded from view by houses on Tatariki St and Goodwin Dr, council documents show.

In 2005 Mrs Thew noticed large groups of very young children hanging around the local church, with broken windows a frequent occurrence.

She decided to talk to them and find out what it was they wanted from their community.

"I just said to them to come and have a talk to me, tell me what you want.

"Every Wednesday I'll be here and you can talk to me."

Only two children showed up to the first meeting but they were immaculately dressed in island-print shirts, with their hair smartly combed back.

She told both the young boys to write down what they wanted to see in their neighbourhood.

"It's your piece of paper, your dreams, you write them down," she told them.

The kids looked stunned, as if no one had ever asked them what they wanted before, Mrs Thew says.

Eventually they began writing and drawing skateparks and fields.

News spread and by the third week about 40 children from all over the Rosehill area arrived to write down their dreams.

The important thing was that the children were being given a voice, Mrs Thew says.

She insisted on staying out of the process and contacted the then Papakura mayor John Robertson and had the children show him their ideas.

Mr Robertson was so impressed that eight kids with their dreams in hand were taken to make a submission to Papakura District Council.

After a few moments one girl was brave enough to speak up, Mrs Thew says.

"She finally stood up and, speaking very eloquently, she showed each councillor her picture of what she wanted in the community. She could only have been seven or eight."

The council agreed the children's ideas would make a great community park.

Since then the project has moved slowly but surely with the council buying some properties bordering the reserve for demolition between 2007 and 2008.

Papakura Local Board member Michael Turner says the reserve is a great

example of how the board and community can work together.

The Rosehill Community Group has also put a lot of work into the park and is planning to have edible plants and fruit trees in it, its chairman John Adams says.

Mrs Thew recently tracked down the two boys that came to her first meeting.

They wish to remain unnamed but she says they are proud of what has been done. Both are now about 16 and she hopes they will come to see what they started.