



District 16 Project 2004-2006

Zonta and the Teen Parent Schools

Zonta is an international service organisation attractive to women in business and the professions who are committed to making a difference for women in their local and international communities. But we are simply not yet well enough known. We need to spread the word - about ourselves and about the success of our service programmes!

One of our goals is to become the 'preferred service organisation' for women in business and the professions. By aligning with a nationwide organisation that meets Zonta's service ideals, we have the opportunity to make a real difference for women and at the same time gain a much higher profile.

At the 2003 Zonta District Conference held in Wanganui in September 2003, members selected the Teen Parent Schools as our District Project for the 2004-2006 biennium.

Setting the scene

Imagine your daughter or grand-daughter at 15 – just a child herself, about to give birth. In your despair you think, "She's ruined her life".

Then imagine her 6 years later – she's just graduated as a lawyer, she's half way through her medical degree, she's a successful marketer, teacher, builder, physiotherapist, accountant, or she's studying for higher honours. And she's a loving mother, comfortable and competent in her multi-functional roles.

The Association of Teen Parent Educators (ATPENZ) doesn't consider these young mothers to be on life's scrapheap. Ongoing formal education combined with life skills training (budgeting, nutrition, parenting, job interview techniques and a myriad of others) helps these young women develop into contributors to their community, to their families and to society.

One young mother who's now attending Whangarei Teachers' College says of her experience at the local Teen Parents Centre, He Mataariki, "They believed in me – they gave me a second chance at learning, an opportunity to have another go. It might seem the end of the world at the time you get pregnant, but you can make choices. They gave me a lot of confidence and motivation."

Where are the Schools located? – all over New Zealand

Linden (Wellington)	35 students
Upper Hutt	25 students
Gisborne	20 students
Tauranga	25 students
Kaiapoi	30 students
Napier	20 students
Rotorua	30 students
Masterton	20 students
Whangarei	24 students
Stratford	20 students
Palmerston North	30 students
Hamilton	25 students
Kawerau	20 students
TOTAL	324 students

New Schools Opening In 2004

Newton (Auckland)	20 students predicted	opening July 2004
Titirangi (Auckland)	no. uncertain	opening late 2004
Linwood (Christchurch)	30 students predicted	opening September 2004

Additional Schools Planned – opening dates not yet set

Flaxmere (Hastings)
Manurewa
Dunedin

How can Zontians assist?

Clubs throughout New Zealand will liaise with their local school to agree the best way they can assist.

Food Programme

One way is by supporting the Food Programme. Some Clubs are already supporting Teen Parent Schools with practical help such as funding essential additional equipment, scholarships etc.

It is a proven fact that people learn better with a healthy, nutritious meal inside them. Everyone involved in the ongoing education of teenage parents sees the provision of food as essential for the health and wellbeing of these young parents and their children.

Poor nutrition can lead to lack of concentration, recurring illness for mother and child and generally a lack of learning ability. It is an underlying philosophy of the Schools that introducing teenage parents and their children to nutritious meals, good eating habits and meal planning for families is invaluable for their ongoing education, better health and overall welfare.

All of the essential skills of learning that are listed in the New Zealand Curriculum document are able to be taught through the food programme – literacy, numeracy, communication skills and so on. Students are involved with planning menus, purchasing, helping with cooking and kitchen duties, at the same time gaining food hygiene and practical food preparation skills.

Such a structured programme of healthy eating, formal education and quality childcare has seen students achieve excellent academic results, helping them to break the cycle of poverty, loss of hope and welfare dependency.

But ATPENZ does not receive Government funding for the food programme that is such a key element in the learning ability of the teen mothers, some of whom are funding it themselves out of very meagre resources. This is how Zonta can assist. Financial contributions are needed to enable the food programme to be introduced into all of the Teen Parent Schools.

Zonta will participate in a committee that will oversee the distribution of funds raised.

Other ways Zonta is helping

- ✓ by using its **influence with policy makers**, Zonta can assist the Association of Teen Parent Educators (ATPENZ) lobby for their food programme to be included in Government funding
- ✓ by getting involved in “**hands on**” roles at the School nearest to each Club
- ✓ donating **funds for equipment** for use by the schools
- ✓ by **lobbying for schools where there is a need** that is currently not being met
- ✓ by helping to **break the cycle of poverty** by helping teenage mothers complete
- ✓ their education and become contributors to society
- ✓ by **promoting justice and respect for human rights**

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