



A green thumbled journey

Judith Paine
Hamlin Road Farm co-ordinator

Judy Paine grew up in a large King Country family – a family where each child was responsible for their own vegetable patch. Gardening is in her blood which is why, when she first saw the unused land surrounding the Hamlin Road residential service, Judy understood the potential of what she was looking at.

At the time Judy was a support worker at another Pathways residential service. “All of the young men there were keen for something to do.” So, with the support of Pathways and in consultation with the local community, Judy hatched a plan to develop the 10 acres surrounding the residential service.

“The land was covered in scrub and rubbish and broken-down fences,” says Judy. “Our first job was to clear it. The boys loved it, and the harder we worked the more good physical work they wanted.” Eight years later Hamlin Road Farm is a fully functioning, commercial-scale, organic-certified horticultural operation selling eggs, seedlings and vegetables to the market.

At any one time, up to 20 people using Auckland mental health services work at the farm. They gain work skills, earn a wage and take part in a range of training courses. “All of them thrive on the experience. It’s wonderful to see people come in and gain self-esteem, skills and health,” says Judy. “We’re like a family here. There is no stigma attached. Everyone who comes here has experience of mental illness and that frees people up to talk about it, compare experiences and gain peer support...it’s the best possible place for recovery.”

Now in her sixties, Judy is progressively handing over some of the responsibilities of the farm. She has stepped away from her previous role as a manager and now shares the co-ordination role with a colleague. She thinks the next step might be to reduce her working week to four days - but that’s as close to retirement as she’s getting!

For Judy, Hamlin Road Farm has been a fabulous journey. “The staff and management at Pathways are brilliant and totally supportive. I really appreciate that, but the best part is the enormous improvement that you witness in the people who work here. They feel it. We see it and their families see it,” she says.

Judy’s recovery vision and the seed she sowed to develop Hamlin Road Farm was recognised in 2009 when she was awarded the Trish Glen Achievement Award, an annual award for Pathways staff members who make exceptional contributions. In her typical style, Judy shared the celebration with the “Hamlin Road guys”. “They were as proud as I was,” says Judy. “Without them, I couldn’t have done it.”

Pathways People

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