



Press Release

6 April 2009

EDUCATION TRUST GETS CASH INJECTION

Children with Down Syndrome who need speech language therapy will soon benefit from a \$15,000 donation granted to the UpsideDowns Education Trust by Sovereign Sunshine.

The UpsideDowns Education Trust funds the specialist speech language therapy for children with Down Syndrome. Children aged from 6 months up attend regular speech therapy sessions to help them gain invaluable communication skills, essential for their ongoing development.

UpsideDowns Education Trust Chairperson, Melanie Watson, said most children with Down Syndrome will have difficulty with communication.

“International research has highlighted that children with Down Syndrome generally understand more than they can actually verbally express, therefore, providing access to high quality speech language therapy is key in giving children the opportunity to achieve their true potential,” she said.

The Auckland based trust currently funds speech language therapy programmes for 36 children in the greater Auckland area. Run by one part-time, temporary staff member and a small team of volunteers the Trust aims longer term, to extend their services nationwide.

“We currently have 15 families on our waiting list, with more people contacting us every week. The Trust is meeting a real need that is not funded by Government or any other agency. Without our support, families are forced to try and fund expensive therapy on their own, and for some this is simply out of their reach.

“Over the last few decades the attitude towards children with special needs has seen an enormous change for the better. In the past it was often a case of out of sight, out of mind, now children with conditions such as Down Syndrome are active members of school classrooms. However, to make sure they can make the most of the opportunities a mainstream classroom can offer, they need help to develop effective communication skills for learning and to form positive relationships with other children and adults.”

The \$15,000 donation from Sovereign Sunshine will fund speech language therapy programmes for 5 children for a year. The UpsideDowns Education Trust is fully reliant on donations from the public, trust applications and their annual fundraising Gala Dinner and Auction - Share the Dream - to be held on Saturday 8 August at The Hyatt Regency in Auckland.

The Sovereign Sunshine programme which is backed by Kiwi actress and mother of two, Greer Robson helps under-resourced children’s charities by providing them with funding. Each month the initiative focuses on a different charity group, with members of the public deciding via online voting which charity will receive the funding. Sovereign staff also play their part, by helping to raise funds for the different charities.

Sovereign Marketing Communications Manager, Richard Allen, said Sovereign is very committed to encouraging health and well-being in local communities through the programme. To find out more about Sovereign Sunshine or to vote for a charity visit www.sovereignsunshine.co.nz

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For further information:

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About The UpsideDowns Education Trust

- Established in 2002 to support families of children with Down Syndrome
- Is currently funding speech language therapy for 36 children
- Auckland based trust
- Chairperson – Melanie Watson
- Operated by volunteers
- Holds an annual gala dinner and Auction: Share the Dream – 8 August 2009
- Patrons: Norm Hewitt and Arlene Thomas Hewitt
- Olympian Barbara Kendall is competing on Dancing with the Stars on behalf of UpsideDowns Education Trust
- www.upsidedowns.co.nz