

Joan Moore, QSM
1932 – 2006

Traditionally volunteers have provided comfort and entertainment for children in hospital – they have read stories, helped at meal times, distributed toys and provided a welcome break from routines when parental visiting was limited and children were in hospitals for long periods. Over the last 20 years we have seen a remarkable change thanks to the vision of Joan Moore who saw the role that carefully selected and trained volunteers could play in supporting the child and family.

Even as a young woman it was clear she was destined to be involved in work with children. She worked as an aide in a Health Camp and later spent four and half years as a housemother in a children's home. Married, with 3 sons, and a husband involved in local council politics, she was busy in activities involving children as Parent Teacher Association Secretary and in co-ordinating Christian education programmes and assisting with school holiday programmes and cub groups.

In 1975 she joined the Auckland Hospital Lay Chaplaincy and for the following eight years visited the Princess Mary Paediatric Unit weekly thus gaining valuable insights into the needs of children and families. During those years she completed the Auckland Technical Institute Certificate and the Massey University Certificate in Early Childhood Education. These qualifications were to put to good use when at times she relieved for long periods as Pre-School Activities Officer at the Hospital.

By the mid-seventies significant changes were occurring in the understanding of the needs of children in hospital and a children's hospital dedicated to excellence in the care of children was being planned. At that time the Children in Hospital Liaison Group (CHLG), later to become the Children's Health Liaison Group, was set up as a sub-group of the Early Childhood Education Liaison Group. Here was a group representing a wide range of interest in children ready to support schemes which would benefit children in

hospital. Importantly they included not only members of the early childhood and parent groups of that time but members of the medical and nursing professions.

In 1978, impressed with the work Joan was already doing with volunteers working with playgroups in the outpatient clinics, Dr Ian Hassall, then Director of Medical Services, New Zealand Plunket Society, wrote to the Paediatric staff at Auckland Hospital suggesting that a Ward Grandmother scheme along lines suggested by Joan Moore should be set up and that she should be co-ordinator. A year later the CHLG supported by Dr Hassall, Professor John Dower of the Auckland University School of Medicine and Elizabeth Connolly, District Officer, Early Childhood, Department of Education applied for a grant from the Mental Health Foundation and received \$6000 for expenses for the Toy Library and Grandparent Scheme volunteers to cover travel and meal expenses. The scene was now set for the development of a volunteer scheme which has operated for more than 25 years.

It has often been asked, both in New Zealand and overseas, why this scheme has been so successful and how it is so many of the same volunteers have remained over a long period time. To a huge extent the answer lies in Joan Moore's commitment to a scheme which she believed would operate to the benefit of children and families and to the detailed planning which was to go into setting it up.

An important aspect of its success was that Joan Moore was already personally known to many of the nursing and medical staff and that the Assistant Principal Nurse, Paediatrics, June Milne, supported the scheme and recommended it to her staff. In addition Joan had an advisory committee: the Assistant Principal Nurse Paediatrics, the Paediatric Medical Tutorial Specialist, the Supervising Social Worker and a member of CHLG. The Supervising Social Worker was to be available for consultation on selection of volunteers.

The first Ward Grandmothers (it was not long before there were Ward-Grandfathers too) went on the wards in 1980. They had already been through a careful selection procedure

– it was not enough for them to simply indicate they wished to volunteer -they attended a training course which included 3 two hour sessions in the play group and lectures on play, child development, hospital organisation, listening skills and the effects of separation. Paediatricians and nursing staff were all involved in these. It is interesting to note that despite the huge commitment of three sessions a week required of the volunteers when working with a child, the main reason for dropping out were changes in family circumstances or altered work commitments.

During the late 70s and early 80s Joan Moore travelled widely in the United Kingdom and Canada visiting children's hospitals and support services. She also travelled extensively in New Zealand speaking to community groups. She was, as always, particularly concerned with empowering parents. In 1984 she was asked by Auckland Hospital to become Parent Liaison Officer at the Princess Mary Unit, a role she filled until 1988. She was a member of the CHLG throughout its existence, held the offices of President and Secretary at various times, and deeply involved in planning of seminars and publicity and fundraising events. As parent support groups developed she acted as an advisor and readily gave them support. Many parents have been grateful for that support in times of need.

Eventually hospital management realized the role of co-ordinator of the various volunteer groups working with children in hospital required recognition and funding and with financial assistance from the CHLG a position was created and remains within the Play Department. Throughout the entire period Joan Moore worked with the CHLG preparing material for the guidance of parents and others involved in hospitals. This included a "Code of Rights for Children in Hospital" and Standards for Children in Hospital" and a tape-slide presentation "Going to Hospital" which was made available to groups throughout New Zealand.

In 1990 Joan was elected Deputy Chairperson for the Auckland Area Health Board Children's Health Task Force and the following year was a member of the project team

for the Auckland Area Health Board which prepared the report on the development of child health services.

Joan Moore's next project was her involvement on the committee set up with health funding to establish an Information Service in Starship. In the years before her retirement she worked as a volunteer in the information Centre where her knowledge and understanding of families with children in hospital and their special health needs has proved invaluable both to the staff and to those needing information.

It is probably not so well known that since the setting up of the new health systems Joan has attended the monthly Auckland Hospital Board meetings as an observer, passing on relevant information from those meetings to parent and support groups. As a result of her efforts a small group was able to meet with Management and express their concerns over some matters of safety and security which were later followed up.

As far back as 1983 Joan Moore was awarded the Queen's Service Medal in recognition of her work with children and families in hospital but it is fair to say that her concern for children extended far beyond the health services. Whenever and wherever an advocate was needed for children Joan was there. But her greatest contribution must surely be that she did so much to make hospitals a better environment for the child whose parents, volunteers and professionals of all disciplines worked together for the benefit of that child.

Joan Brockett

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