

## You're bringing magic to those who need it most

MELANIE MAY WAS A SWEET LOUISE MEMBER FROM CAMBRIDGE WHO PASSED AWAY LAST YEAR. SHE WAS SISTER-IN-LAW TO KAREN MAY, WHO SHARES MELANIE'S SPECIAL STORY BELOW.

"Melanie was born intellectually disabled and autistic. As an adult she was a young child in a woman's body, with the cognitive ability of a four year old.

Melanie could be 'high' or 'low'. We loved it when she was on a high. She was funny, spontaneous, she would burst into song and dance.

She was also gifted. Like many autistic people, her memory for certain things was fantastic and in her case, it was remembering faces and names.

Melanie loved hats, colouring books, music, gardening and her chickens. Family were incredibly important to her too and she was lucky enough to have two families – her caregivers and us.

Melanie was 35 years old when she developed primary breast cancer. One day, while I was showering her I noticed an indentation on her right breast. We made an appointment to see the doctor, and that's when her cancer journey began.

***She didn't own her cancer – that was my husband Vernon's and my job. Cancer was just a word for her. She didn't understand what it meant in terms of what she would go through in the coming years.***

To help explain to Melanie what was going to happen, I put together a booklet with pictures of the hospital, the equipment, the doctors and nurses. Whenever we needed to take her to treatment, the little book would come with us and we'd flip through the pages while in the waiting room and the staff gave her stickers after each treatment.

Post-mastectomy, Mel would often stun people she had just met by shaking their hand and hitting them with, 'Hi, my name's Mel and I've lost a boobey to cancer'.

When she was diagnosed with Stage 4 breast cancer in 2014 there was more anger and tears on my behalf. I couldn't help but think 'why Mel?' as she had been through so much already. Thanks to support like yours though, we were introduced to the amazing services of Sweet Louise.

***Sweet Louise was the light at the end of the tunnel on days when it was really dark.***



Just knowing that we could phone or email them for a chat – or just a good belly laugh - was so comforting. I want you to know that that really helped.

It was great having written material from them which helped explain to Melanie more about the disease. The vouchers provided each year were a real treat for her. She adored getting her nails done and trying out all the different colours. This is what your support of Sweet Louise meant to us – the little things were huge for Mel and for us.

Thanks to Sweet Louise supporters, we also went to two theatre shows and Melanie loved them, especially Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat. She wasn't well at the time, but she lit up watching the show and she had a magical grin on her face the entire time.

***Sweet Louise brought happiness to Mel at a time she really needed it. Being intellectually disabled, she didn't have a concept of time like us, and she didn't understand her disease. But with your help, she was able to smile, to dance like she used to, and enjoy life's little pleasures.***

Melanie passed on July 4th 2017. She was a huge part of our lives and she is hugely missed. She was my sister-in-law, the sister I never had and my 'other' daughter all in one. She taught me so many lessons and it was a privilege to be part of her life."

**Karen**



# A Sweet Louise Saturday at Gibbs Farm

**ON SATURDAY 10TH MARCH SWEET LOUISE HOSTED A DAY AT GIBBS FARM SCULPTURE PARK, AND THANKS TO YOU, IT WAS A FANTASTIC SUCCESS.**

Gibbs Farm Sculpture Park is situated on the Kaipara Harbour, North West of Auckland. It is a private farm, owned and treasured by Alan Gibbs and his family.

It contains the leading collection of large-scale outdoor sculptures in New Zealand, as well as an array of animals including alpacas, emus, bison, zebras and giraffes!

Not only were we lucky enough to have the farm on a Saturday, we were also blessed with a cloudless sky on what now feels like the last hurrah to summer.

Families and friends came with picnics

and plenty of sunblock for a day of walking and sculpture musing. With coffee from Cafe2U and Dr Feel Good pops for extra energy, guests were ready for the 7km walk around the farm.

Evelyn says going to the farm was like "having won a golden ticket to the art version of Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory".

Janine adds, **"Many thanks Sweet Louise and Gibbs Farm for an awesome day on Saturday. We had been wanting to visit these sculptures for some time and being able to do it together over the weekend and raise funds for the great work you do was a fantastic opportunity. It was a day we would sign up to again and again!"**

We hosted a sellout event, which we couldn't have done without the help of you. To all those who came and supported Sweet Louise on the day, thank you so much!

**Your generosity has meant we raised an amazing \$70,000 to help our members. We are so grateful to all of you who came and supported Sweet Louise on the day, and hope you enjoyed it as much as we did.**

Lastly, a special thank you to all the amazing staff at Gibbs Farm who helped us on the day, to Rachel who led this event with her boundless energy and sharp organisation, and of course, to the Gibbs Family who opened up their magical home to all of us.

# A big welcome to the new Sweet Louise CEO, Philippa Reed!

**IN FEBRUARY, THE SWEET LOUISE TEAM AND BOARD WARMLY WELCOMED OUR NEW CEO, PHILIPPA REED.**

Philippa comes from a varied work and educational background including a Masters in Fine Arts, a doctorate in Germanic languages and literature, and working in the corporate tax field.

More recently, Philippa worked in diversity and inclusion for a number of years, both as a consultant and as Diversity Manager at Auckland Council. She was previously CE of the EEO Trust (now Diversity Works NZ) and has held senior roles at the University of Auckland and KPMG.

"The changes in my career have meant I've had a variety of roles and worked in more sectors than I would have dreamed of.

Sweet Louise has a deservedly fine reputation for the work it undertakes to support people with secondary breast cancer and I am thrilled and humbled to join this organisation and the team.

**If you can stay healthy, curious and interested in the world, you can bring a huge amount of value to organisations, and that is what I hope to do here at Sweet Louise."**

We are so pleased to have Philippa join the Sweet Louise family and look forward to many of you meeting her soon.





# A Pink Month for Mum

ON DECEMBER 8 LAST YEAR, PALMERSTON NORTH TEEN IMOGEN MCRAE CUT OFF HER LONG BROWN HAIR INTO A SHORT PIXIE CUT, AND DYED IT PINK. THIS BEGAN HER "PINK MONTH FOR MUM", A MONTH TO SPORT HER NEW 'DO' AND FUNDRAISE FOR SWEET LOUISE. AT THE END OF HER PINK MONTH, IMOGEN SHAVED ALL HER HAIR OFF.

Imogen, a bright and friendly 16 year old, lost her mother, Harriet, to secondary breast cancer last year.

"Doing the challenge really helped me get through the past few months, it gave me something to focus on", says Imogen.

"A couple of years ago I mentioned

the idea to Mum and she was really supportive, saying she would do it with me ... unfortunately, we never had the chance to do it together."

Imogen set up a Givealittle page online and took to the streets as well. She did an incredible job raising nearly \$4000 for Sweet Louise.

**"Sweet Louise really helped my Mum. Sweet Louise is genuine, down to earth, and making a real impact to the lives of people living with stage four breast cancer."**

Imogen says that all her friends and family have been really supportive.

"They've told me how proud they are of me, and think Mum would have been proud of me too."

And thoughts on her pink hair?

"I loved it!" she says, "It was funky and flamboyant. It made me feel liberated."

The shave didn't instigate nerves either. "I was hardly nervous at all, contrary to what people expect. I was looking forward to a low maintenance cut that would be cool in summer."

An eternal optimist, she concluded, "I was taking advantage of my bad situation and turning it into something positive."

A big thank you to Imogen and all those who supported her!

**Note:** Inspired by Imogen? Feel like a challenge? Talk to us about fundraising for Sweet Louise – we'd love to hear from you! Email Eva on [eva.foreman@sweetlouise.co.nz](mailto:eva.foreman@sweetlouise.co.nz)

# Thank you to the American Women's Club of Auckland

IN 2017, SWEET LOUISE WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE CHOSEN AS THE CHARITY OF THE YEAR FOR THE AMERICAN WOMEN'S CLUB OF AUCKLAND.

Since 1942, the club has been an outreach to Americans, or those who have an American connection, living in New Zealand. The club comes together to meet and support one another's cultural experiences, fundraise, connect and have fun. The club put on some great fundraisers for Sweet Louise throughout the year, including a 4th of July American bake sale, a Christmas tea with a silent auction and in November they celebrated the club's 75th birthday with a 1940's party! Lane Flynn, the president of the club, says they were moved by the personal and positive impact Sweet Louise

has on individuals and families.

**"Most of our members could personally relate to the devastation that cancer can bring to someone's life. We are so proud to have been able to support Sweet Louise and be part of such a vital organisation."**

A very big thank you to Lane and the club for supporting Sweet Louise and for all your hard work over the year.



WE THANK THESE SPONSORS WHO HAVE SO GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED US:



# With your help, members recover their body confidence

AFTER WOMEN UNDERGO A MASTECTOMY, THEIR BRAS AND SWIM SUITS BECOME UNCOMFORTABLE AND UNUSABLE. MASTECTOMY UNDERWEAR IS DESIGNED TO BRING BACK COMFORT AND INSPIRE CONFIDENCE WITHIN.

Naturalwear, a popular service provider with Sweet Louise, has the largest range of post-mastectomy breast care products in New Zealand.

**Thanks to your generous donations, many members use their vouchers at Naturalwear to buy post mastectomy clothing.**

Starting up over 30 years ago, Naturalwear has an Auckland showroom and also provide mobile fitters. The mobile fitters travel the country, visiting women in the comfort of their own home.

Naturalwear started supporting Sweet Louise three years ago. Rich Brady, Director of Naturalwear, says there is a "perfect match" between the company and Sweet Louise. "We're excited to keep developing our relationship with Sweet Louise. We love supporting the breast cancer



community and helping out when we can." Rich says that the greatest feeling is receiving letters of gratitude and appreciation.

**"Those are the things that drive Naturalwear, that emotional response. We want to try and help Sweet Louise members feel their best post-surgery. We try and bring body confidence back."**

**[www.naturalwear.co.nz](http://www.naturalwear.co.nz) / 0800 612 612**

## You helped Christine give her last gift



CHRIS GIBBONS WAS A SWEET LOUISE MEMBER FROM WELLINGTON WHO PASSED AWAY LAST YEAR. YOUR SUPPORT MEANT SHE RECEIVED COMFORT, KINDNESS AND ASSISTANCE WHEN SHE MOST NEEDED IT.

**On her passing, Chris left a special gift in her will for Sweet Louise. We'd like to acknowledge Chris's generosity of spirit. Her thoughtful gift will support other members when they most need it too.**

If you are interested in leaving a special gift in your will to support those living with incurable breast cancer please contact Liz at [liz.henry@sweetlouise.co.nz](mailto:liz.henry@sweetlouise.co.nz) / 021 1460 860.



### Yes, I would like to support Women living with incurable breast cancer

**DONATION DETAILS** Here is my gift of:

- \$25 - to go towards a support meeting
- \$50 - to help a member buy mastectomy clothing
- \$100 - to help a member's family have a special day out
- Your choice: .....
- Tick here to receive information on how to become a regular giver.

#### PAYMENT DETAILS

I would like to pay by:  Visa  Mastercard  Amex  
 Card Number .....  
 Expiry ..... CW (3 digits on back of card) .....  
 Name on Card .....  
 Signature .....

#### OR:

- Cheque: Please make cheques out to 'Sweet Louise'
- Direct Credit to Sweet Louise: 12 - 3198 - 0032019 - 00

#### CONTACT DETAILS

Name.....  
 Address.....  
 ..... Postcode .....  
 Phone .....  
 Email .....

#### PLEASE RETURN TO

Sweet Louise, PO Box 137-343, Parnell, Auckland 1151  
 Thank you for your generous support