



Gabrielle - Growing up in a rural community with an intellectual disability

"The benefit of bringing up a child with an intellectual disability in a rural community is that everyone knows everyone, and they look after each other," says Sheena, Gabrielle's mum. "The downside is you don't have the support of knowing other parents of children with intellectual disabilities."

You may recognise Gabrielle. She is often used as the face of the Calf & Rural Scheme. She lives on a farm on the West Coast of the South Island. Gabrielle has just turned eight-years old and has Down syndrome.

Gabrielle's mum Sheena describes her birth as 'a surprise home birth'. Her husband had about three-minutes to wake up and deliver Gabrielle. Sheena said she immediately knew Gabrielle had Down syndrome. "She was my fourth child, I could just tell."

The family were living in Westport at the time. Gabrielle was born at full term but she was small, weighing just under 5kgs and had respiratory problems. Westport Hospital didn't have the facilities to care for Gabrielle so she was sent to Grey Base Hospital. "The Doctor there had not seen a newborn with Down syndrome before and said he didn't think Gabrielle had it. It gave us false hope, but in my heart I knew." And when she was transferred to Christchurch Hospital they confirmed that Gabrielle did have Down syndrome.

One of the nurses who looked after Gabrielle told Sheena she had a teenage daughter who had Down syndrome. Sheena says she was in such shock she didn't really take it in. Later the nurse sent her a message to say if she had any questions she could contact her. "Afterwards I thought how amazing it was to have someone there that knew how I was feeling."

Sheena said there was a period of grief. "This was not what I expected, this was not what I'd envisioned for my life. I didn't know anyone with Down syndrome, I didn't know what to expect, I was thinking the worst."

I found some information that said she could lead a normal life and that she was going to be okay, that is what I needed to know. And we just accepted it and the main thing then was getting her home to our family. Gabrielle finally came home when she was eight-weeks old."

"I soon found that all those little things that make her a little different are the things I love about her the most. She brings so much joy to our family and those she meets, we wouldn't change a thing," says Sheena.



Gabrielle has just turned eight

Living in a rural community, Gabrielle didn't get all the services she would have if the family had lived in a city. She got a few sessions of physiotherapy, but they stopped when she turned two. She also didn't get any speech therapy until she went to school, and even then it is only about once a month. "With things like speech therapy, she needed the help as early as possible."

Sheena says because they live rurally they miss out on seeing other children who look like Gabrielle. They also miss out on meeting other parents with intellectually disabled children and getting to talk to them and share experiences.

"I saw a little boy with Down syndrome in The Warehouse a while back. I didn't have Gabrielle with me, but I stopped and met him and spoke to his mum."

Some months later I bumped into them again. I had Gabrielle with me so I introduced her to the little boy. It was so cool, it was like being in a club. She was a little bit shy, she shuts down in new situations before she warms up. But it is so cool for her to be with someone who is like her."

Sheena knows that if she lived in a bigger city they would have the opportunity to meet more kids with Down syndrome and their parents.

But it isn't all bad. Sheena says she has found the local school absolutely amazing. "The school hired someone to work directly with Gabrielle to support her in class and during break times. All the kids know her and the older ones look after her. She has good friends from when she started school, her lack of verbal communication hasn't prevented her from having good relationships with her peers."

Gabrielle only says about eight words. She also has a few sign language signs. She has recently got a Touch Chat, a tablet that she uses to communicate, which she has picked up very quickly. "I didn't want her to be frustrated not being able to communicate, which is another reason her Touch Chat is so good. She is generally very expressive. Even if she isn't pushing on the right thing that she needs, she knows she gets a reaction so that has done wonders in her wanting to use it more."

IHC is developing a new online community to help parents of children with intellectual disabilities connect and support each other, this will be a big support to rural families like Sheena and Gabrielle's. You can read about this on page 3.



Gabrielle communicates using a Touch Chat device

Lynda Young-Kennedy, Calf & Rural Scheme Coordinator



It all started 25 years ago when Lynda popped into the local IHC office in Invercargill to see if she could volunteer. It turned out Lynda had just the skills IHC were looking for to help run a weekend care respite facility. The role grew and changed and one day she was asked to look after a few farmers who had donated calves.

"I remember clearly at the time being told it won't get big down here, as Southland would only ever have sheep farmers. Well that couldn't have been more wrong!" Lynda said.

Looking back over the past 25 years Lynda says there have been many highlights. Like meeting Sir Colin Meads. "He was a big man with a huge personality, but I felt instantly at ease. He always made time to find out what was happening in the scheme, he was very supportive of IHC and people with intellectual disabilities. He is sadly missed, but I consider myself lucky to have had the opportunity to have known our wonderful Patron."

Lynda says she has always found farmers to be the 'salt of the earth'.

They just get on with things and adapt as farming changes. "Some farmers are now giving monetary donations instead of a calf or sheep, as this is the best option for them. What I have noticed over the years, is that our farmers keep giving, even in those years when farming is tough, that's such wonderful support. I am truly humbled by the generosity of all our farmers and everyone who have made the scheme the amazing success it is. This allows IHC to support people with Intellectual disabilities in our communities. I would like to shout out a BIG THANK YOU!"



Pledge next season's calf now and win a mystery weekend!

Make your pledge to IHC's Calf & Rural Scheme before 1 June 2021 and you'll automatically be entered into the draw to win a mystery weekend away for two people. There are two prizes to be won, one for farmers in the North Island and one for farmers in the South Island.

Congratulations to Rob & Francis Crothers and David & Tania Jackaways the winners of the January prize draw.

How to donate after cheques are phased out

After June 2021, banks will no longer be accepting cheques. There are other ways you can give:

- Online banking, search for 'IHC Donate' as a registered payee, or use our bank account 02-0500-0734000-002. Please include in the reference fields Lastname, Initials, IHCRural
- Donate online at ihc.org.nz/rural
- Donate a virtual calf and spread the payments over 12 months. Pay by either direct debit
- Automatic payment set up directly with your bank, or by direct debit – sign up at ihc.org.nz/rural and click on Monthly Gift, or set up an automatic payment with your bank using the details for online banking given above

Getting support and information to parents wherever they are in the country

As a Calf & Rural Scheme donor, we wanted to give you a sneak-peak into a new online community you are helping to fund. This community will be particularly useful to parents in rural areas who, like Sheena in the story on the front page, don't have other parents of children with intellectual disabilities around them for support and advice.

Awhi Ngā Mātua is the name of the new community, it means 'hug or embrace parents'. Currently under development, the online community is being led by parents of children with intellectual disabilities.

The idea for Awhi Ngā Mātua grew from a Facebook page set up to support parents of intellectually disabled children during lockdown. While parents can post ideas and talk to each other on this page, they said they wanted a place that was private,

not open to everyone, and a place where they could be anonymous. They also wanted to know that the information they were receiving was evidence based, as there is a lot of bad information online.

Initially the community will be developed for children eight-years old and younger.

"What we would like is for people to be able to get on this site really quickly after diagnosis. Often children get diagnosed and not a lot happens, the family are left in limbo as they get put on waiting lists for child development specialists." says Elizabeth Goodwin who is leading this project. She says parents often feel they don't have anyone to talk to who knows what they are going through. "So the idea is that this is an online place they can come to that will help them through the tough times because they can talk to other parents who are in the same situation, or have been there."

Once someone signs up to Awhi Ngā Mātua, they can select tags so they will receive the information relevant to them - their child's condition, age, and



areas of interest. Education, sleeping and eating are areas many parents are interested in. Parents will be able to read blogs written by parents, have conversations and ask questions. The library's database will find the relevant articles, books and research on the topic and post it with the blog or question. Then people can discuss this online and share strategies they have used or just empathise with the person. The posts will all be searchable, so as content builds up, parents can get information already posted.

IHC couldn't develop new programmes like Awhi Ngā Mātua without your support. Thank you for helping make this happen.

**AWHI NGĀ
MĀTUA**

Photo Competition Winners

Aleisha Roberts
IHC Calf



Fleur Scurr
Livestock



Charlotte Savage
Landscapes



Thanks to all who entered the Photo Competition. There was a high calibre of entries and the winning photos are above. The competition will be run again later this year. Keep an eye out for photo opportunities, particularly of your IHC calves.



MARKET COMMENT

Jamie Cunningham National Dairy Sales Manager – PGG Wrightson Livestock

With autumn rain having a positive impact on feed conditions around the country its pleasing to see this flowing through to the Livestock market with continued improvement on most classes of stock. We have seen cattle selling to a more buoyant bench of buyer's along with lambs for the winter lamb trade in hot demand.

The Dairy beef market for last spring was very challenging with the market softening on the previous couple of years by about 10%, let's hope we see a positive upswing this spring when we start to market this year's IHC calves.

Dairy stock have traded to a positive market over the last couple of months with quality herds along with in-calf

heifers in short supply. The dairy pay-out is looking extremely positive with the Global Dairy Trade going from strength to strength.

With calving only a couple of months away now is the time to consider pledging a calf to the IHC Calf Scheme.

PGG Wrightson Livestock's enduring 35-year relationship with the IHC is one of the longest running charitable partnerships in rural New Zealand. The IHC Calf & Rural Scheme, which is run in conjunction with our farming customers, raises significant funds to help the IHC charity provide support to people with intellectual disabilities and their families within the rural community.

When donating a calf, we encourage farmers to donate a quality well-bred calf that is early born and will get up to good weights for the dairy beef sales that start in late spring each year.

Sheep and beef farmers also donate towards the IHC scheme, when selling stock through PGG Wrightson's if you would like to donate talk with your local PGG Wrightson livestock rep or IHC for further details.

We encourage you to continue to support this scheme and if you do not already please consider pledging stock to this fantastic cause. We thank our clients and farmers for your continued and generous support of this scheme.

Transportation of calves

An important reminder that IHC can no longer pick up and get calves to the sale. Please contact your local

transporter and arrange for them to get your calf off to sale at a time convenient to you.



We'd like to thank the transporters for their help in getting your calves to sale.

Give the gift of a meaningful life

For 70 years, with support from caring New Zealanders like you, IHC has been helping people with intellectual disabilities live rich and meaningful lives.



Through a gift in your Will, you will carry on IHC's long tradition of care for people with intellectual disabilities.

If you would like to continue to bring purpose, joy and choice to the lives of people with disabilities, please consider a gift to IHC in your Will.

To find out more, please contact Chansina Chin on **0800 746 444** or email chansina@ihc.org.nz

Thanks to the canvassers

Thank you to our canvassers. They are the face of IHC Calf & Rural Scheme out in the rural community. Keep an eye out for your local canvasser in their high-vis pink vest.



Find us at Fieldays

We'll be in the Pavilion Foyer (site PA1B) this year. Please drop in and say hi, we'd love to thank you in person.

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