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## **LIBRARY OPENS ITS DOORS TO NEEDY GRANDPARENTS**

Onehunga's innovative new café and function centre, The Library, is opening its doors to grandparents next month by hosting a charitable event to raise awareness of the plight of ageing caregivers both here in New Zealand and in Africa.

The Library founder and director Debbie Leaver says the night is to celebrate amazing grandparents out there who are raising their grandchildren under extremely difficult and stressful circumstances.

"The event is another step for The Library, which opened for business eight months ago with the aim of educating people about good food. Now we want to educate the public about great Grandparents."

The Library service organic allergen-friendly food to customers with health in mind. The Library venue was previously the Carnegie Library which has been converted into a space where the community can continue to feel comfortable mingling.

"By highlighting the plight of Grandparents we feel like we're educating the public, just like Carnegie did. This night is about all those amazing grandparents raising their grandchildren, often at a time in their lives when they least expected it."

The event, which is being held on Saturday 16 August and includes a dinner of organic and/or sustainably-grown produce followed by the screening of a documentary-style film called "*A Grandmothers Tribe*".

This locally-produced film tells the story of two African grandmothers who are looking after large families of grandchildren, orphaned by the African AIDS epidemic. "Sadly, this is an all-too-common situation, but the strength of these grandmothers in adversity is truly inspiring," says Debbie. "As it says in the film, they are the hope of Africa."

All proceeds from the dinner will go to the Stephen Lewis Foundation, which reaches millions of grandmothers in need across sub-Saharan Africa. In addition The Library is organising a blind auction to raise funds for local grandparents in need through the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust. "We wanted to bring this issue home. This is to help the grandparents around us who also need our love and support."

To reduce overheads and maximise overall proceeds, The Library is asking for donations of organically or locally grown produce and sustainable beverages to incorporate into the menu. They are also calling for experienced volunteers to work on the night, and for donations of products and services to be included in the blind auction.

“It’s a way for the community to get involved and show their support,” says Debbie. “Ultimately we’re hoping to be the catalyst for a successful and inspiring community event that will raise awareness and some much-needed funds for these extremely worthwhile charities.”

Debbie says since opening for business eight months ago, they have enjoyed huge support from customers and suppliers, many of whom understand the difficulty of bringing the organic food concept to life. “They appreciate that in creating this cafe we have had to reduce our profit margins significantly but we refuse to compromise on our philosophy, despite the current economic environment.

“In addition, this event fits in with our somewhat philanthropic approach and our wish to give something back to the community and we’re hoping it will be a huge success!”

ENDS

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### Background

The Library Café and Function Centre is located in Onehunga’s historic Carnegie Library and offers “deliciously nutritious” organic allergen-friendly food in a family and environmentally friendly environment. “You name it, we do it!” says Debbie. “Gluten-free, egg-free, dairy-free, lactose-free, kid-friendly, pregnancy-friendly, diabetic-friendly, vegan and vegetarian!”

The idea for the café came about four years ago when Debbie and her husband Ross were expecting their first child, and Debbie was hyper-wary of contracting listeria. “I was being cautious out of choice, but it made me think about all those people whose wellbeing and in some cases lives, depends on making the right food choices.”

Poignantly, this became Debbie and Ross’s story soon after when their young son had an anaphylactic reaction to nuts. “It was horrific but it gave us first-hand experience of food allergies and gave us a lot more empathy for our customers.”