

Raphael House, Rudolf Steiner School

Term 4 Issue 38
11 December, 2009

Dear Parents, Caregivers and Friends,

This is the last Bush Telegraph of the School year. The School year is coming to an end.. The teachers are now completing final reports and are busily preparing for the end of year with their respective classes.

Class 8 are away on their Threshold Camp and we look forward to their return on Friday afternoon. Class 10 are away in Hawkes Bay on their Surveying Camp. On Monday the Lower School children were treated to a rendition of the Oberfufer Shepherd's Play. It was wonderful and much enjoyed performance many thanks to those involved in the play.

Next week, on Monday 14 December, the King's Pageant will be presented to the School in two performances. During the day first and then an evening performance for our School Community, to be held in the Eurythmy Room at (7.30 pm on Monday evening.) There is no need to book and all are very warmly invited and welcome. The King's Pageant is a symbolic picture of the reverence, dignity and wonder that the three King's brought when they met the 'Jesus' Child in Bethlehem and is taken from the Gospel of St Matthew. It is a fairly short pageant of approximately 20 minutes and is mainly singing. The 4th King, Artaban enters towards the end of the pageant. He tells his story of how he came too late and was not able to meet the three King's in Bethlehem. Artaban really brings the human dimension to the pageant. If you have not been before I recommend that you come. It is a wonderful celebration and important part of what we remember at this time of the year.

Next Tuesday evening there will be the Community Carol Singing evening at 6.00 pm in the Eurythmy Room, lead by Julian Raphael.

Following on that evening our Senior Class 12 students will share in a "Reflections Evening" which looks back over the years the students and parents have been involved with the School and celebrates their journey.

On Wednesday 16 December the last day of term the whole School will gather for our Special Assembly where Class 12 are farewelled. The lower classes will then spend the rest of the morning with their class teachers and specialist teachers. School finishes at 12.30 and Class 12 will remain at school to spend the afternoon in a further closing and leaving ceremony with their teachers.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the many, many parents of our Community for their ongoing support and encouragement over the year.

On behalf of the staff, we wish you a restful, joy filled and Happy Christmas summer break.

Karen Brice-Geard School Coordinator on behalf of the College of Teachers: Ray Shore, David Stephenson and Margaret Sweaney

FROM THE OFFICE

On the last day of School, the Runchiman busses will be leaving School at 12.45pm We would like to thank them for their wonderful service to our School this year.

' SCHOOL HOLIDAYS' LOWER SCHOOL OFFICE HOURS

The School will be closed 17 December - 28 January 2010. If you would like to contact the School, please leave a message on the answer phone, this will be cleared periodically from 29-31 December and 11 January - 28 January 2010.

TERM DATES 2010

Term 1 - 2 February - 1 April
Term 2 - 19 April - 25 June
Term 3 - 19 July - 24 September
Term 4 - 11 October - 17 December

THANK YOU'S

Class 3, who provide the 'red box' service for mail delivery during the day, many thanks for doing this so willingly. Class 5, thank you to the students who collect absentee notes, and ferry the 'red box' between offices first thing each morning. We have really appreciated your work. Class 7, thank you to the many students of class 7 who willingly and cheerfully gave up their own time to be at the Office early. We appreciate that this may have involved catching early buses, getting out of bed earlier than usual, or hassling their parents to get to School in good time. It was a delight to have you here. Class 9, we truly appreciate your involvement on Thursdays with the School's paper and cardboard recycling.

From Fiona

"Light that gave warmth to simple Shepherd's hearts. Light that enlightened the wise heads of kings".

Greetings at this time of Advent. At School we have celebrated the first week of Advent in the Paradise Garden in the transformed Eurythmy Room. The second celebration brought the Shepherd to the Babe in the Manger in our Monday play.

Our final celebrations begin on Monday 14 December with the King's Pageant. There are two performances in the afternoon for students and the community are invited to this meditative enactment at 7.30pm. Celebrations continue on Tuesday evening at 6pm with Carol singing. Come and raise our voices

Ray Shore

For the Festivals group: Melanie, Ashley, Irene Philip, Brendon, and Ray

Last Friday night I attended the Class 12 play and I want to express how much I was impressed by the enthusiasm, skills and maturity of the students. I am not claiming to be familiar with "Faust" as a play but it seems to me that it requires some level of insight before it can be brought to an audience. I believe this insight is only possible through having a good education starting from early childhood through the teenage years. Debbie and I always come to the Class 12 plays although we have not had a child at the School for some years. For me, as a member of the Community at large, the play is the crowning achievement of students' School careers and evidence that they have become accomplished in giving us a marvelous performance which is the result of recent hard work but is also based on high levels of inner development.

Congratulations to all!

Matthew

LIBRARY BOOKS

There are still many outstanding School Library books. Please check at home for books and remind your child to return them immediately. Thank you. Lyn.

SCC FORMS

Yeah!! Great progress to get significantly over the 50% mark, now. Many thanks to the 141 families who have returned forms. I especially appreciate the replies which have been clear about family circumstances. Knowing is much easier for our planning than not knowing!!

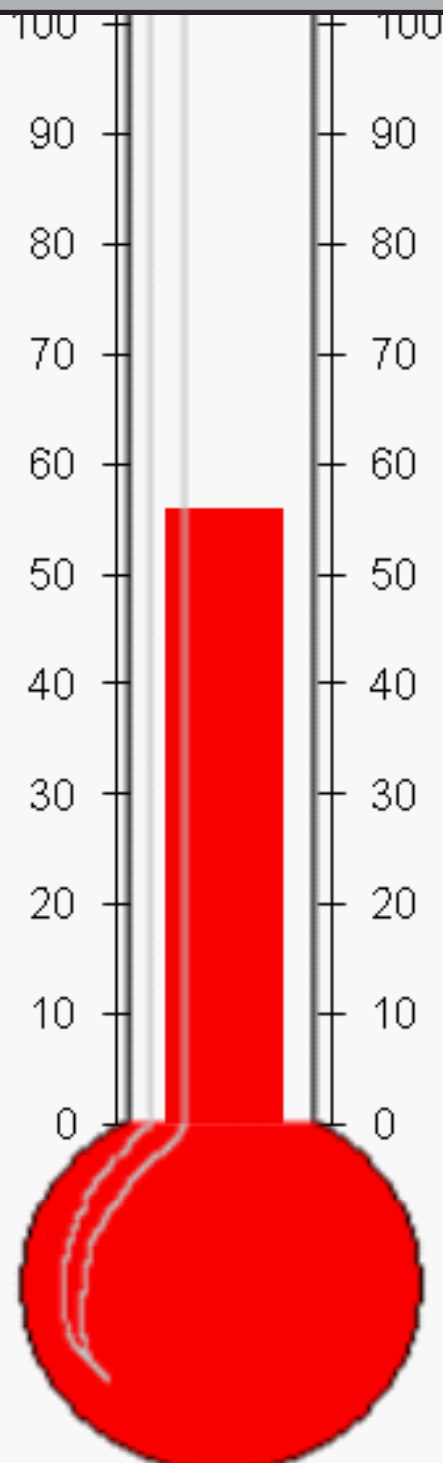
I have been emailing SCC forms to people who have misplaced copies and can easily do this for anyone else in the same situation.

If you need another form, please contact me at: alan.c@raphaelhouse.school.nz

Go on, make my Christmas!! Let's have a flood of forms in the last week of term. You know you will feel better having completed this task before term ends!! Won't you?? Really?? Some of you, perhaps???

Season's greetings

Alan Chapman
Resource Manager



ADULT EDUCATION

Over the last years I have had the pleasure to work with am most inspiring group of parents in the school, those of the Adult Education Group.

I wish to sincerely acknowledge this wonderful group of people who have given so freely, willingly and generously of their time, inspiration and vision in creating the Term 1 and 2 programme each year.

What this group has created over the years has been a true gift to the School Community, teachers and parents alike.

So a huge thank you to Lut Hermans, Sabine Sharpe, Hetty Vink, Jennifer, Cushman, Konny Reichert, Laura Hurtado and Magrita Freie.

Julia Sherriff

PTFA

An Open Letter to all PTFA Members

It is almost time for the School to close its doors for the Christmas holidays, and for the teachers to take a well-earned break over summer.

This letter is intended to give you an end-of-year summary of the activities of the Parents, Teachers, & Friends Association, the PTFA, your Association.

The PTFA has been in existence for almost 6 months, following ratification of its constitution at a community meeting earlier in the year, and the election of a group of people to form the PTFA Committee.

So what has the Committee been up to?

Initially the Committee spent time working out what it was there to do. Some of the Committee had been part of the previous informal Steering Group and had a very clear idea about the need for the Committee to focus on advocacy for parents, while those who had not been involved in the Steering Group brought new ideas about how the Committee could give leadership to the PTFA in meeting its primary aim of providing moral and material support to the School.

The Committee has thought deeply about the dynamics of our School community, and has seen its role as to facilitate and advise, to foster fair, open and supportive dialogue between any members of the School community who seek positive and inclusive ways

forward.

The Committee has been actively building working relationships with other groups in the School: the Trust, the Board of Trustees, the College of Teachers, and the various groups that carry out the many initiatives that go on in the School.

More recently the Committee has been focused on opportunities to build, strengthen and promote the School Community. Members of the Committee were involved in the Reunion (which brought together so many old and new faces), and more recently the Committee held the quiz night.

It has been fantastic to see the spirit of the School reflected in so many of the activities that go on, in and around the School. The Toy, Craft and Food Festival was a real highlight. As parents, most of us will have been to class plays and some will have been with our children on their camps.

Groups of parents who sponsor particular initiatives have been active, often with little fanfare but getting things done. For example, it has been wonderful to see the strong programme of adult education talks, and the strengthening of the health and nursing practitioners' group during the year.

Of course not all the Community's activities require the involvement of the PTFA Committee, but it is there to give advice and support when requested.

A challenging year for the School

It has clearly been a year of challenge for the School. The year saw the appointment of Malcolm Baxter as a Special Adviser, and then Ken Wilson as the Limited Statutory Manager for the School. Malcolm and Ken have worked hard with the Board of Trustees, the Trust, and the College to address what were clearly weaknesses in the systems and processes for managing the School, including its finances.

The Committee would like to express its appreciation for the work that Malcolm and Ken have done with the School. We would also like to record our appreciation of the significant effort put into this work by Karen as the Principal, by the Trust, the teachers, the management staff, the Trustees, and in particular by Glen McCauley as the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

The PTFA Committee has played its part in this process by discussing your feedback on the information provided in the recent community meeting with the Board of Trustees and the Trust, in order to suggest how the information could be made clearer for parents. We will be continuing to talk with the Board and Trust about how

communication with the community can be improved next year.

The School has risen to many challenges throughout the year. Community meetings have been held to explain the financial predicament of the School to the parent community, and then to outline in more detail how it intends to become financially sustainable. The School has asked parents to play their part by returning their Special Character Contribution forms, to let the School know how much they intend to donate to it. (The School has chosen to stick with gifting or donations because of its belief in the 'quality' of gifted money, and also for the tax advantages that donations offer parent.).

It is now up to us as the School community to reciprocate and demonstrate our trust in the School, by providing our SCC forms, and giving the School certainty about the budget it has to manage in the New Year.

Time to move on?

As most people in the community will know, there is a small group of parents, known as the Concerned Parents Group, who have expressed their concerns about School management, systems and processes, quite openly and at times forcefully. The group have taken their concerns to the Board of Trustees, the Trust, the Special Adviser, the Limited Statutory Manager, the Ombudsman, as well as to the Ministry of Education and the Minister of Education.

Recently a member of the Concerned Parents Group entered classrooms during lesson time and attempted to give a letter from the CPG to the teachers in their classrooms. The Committee believes that that action by the CPG member, who is also a member of the PTFA Committee, was completely inappropriate.

The Committee is concerned to make clear to the School community that, whilst we regard advocacy for parents as a significant part of our role, we are not affiliated in any way with the CPG (or any other group) and we do not endorse its activities.

So, where to in 2010?

Well, the environment in which all schools operate will be no less challenging next year. This means that the School will need to continue to build on the work it has done to ensure it becomes financially secure and sustainable. The School has been on quite a journey this year, and that is set to continue: it is a journey that requires all of us, as the School Community to work together to make sure that the Waldorf education that we all hold so dear is able to flourish.

2010 will see elections held for the Board of Trustees. We will all be asked to indicate whether we wish to stand for election, or to support those who wish to continue their work on the Board, or to join the Board.

2010 will also be a time to strengthen the partnership between the School and the Community, to establish more firmly the relationship of trust, respect and reciprocity that is so essential to a Waldorf school.

The Committee has agreed to organise the orientation of new families next term, and we look forward to communicating to them our belief in and commitment to the School.

Chairs up on desks

And so to the holidays, and a time of reflection, when we look back over the year at what has been achieved. The Committee wishes each of you the very best for a peaceful Christmas: may you return with renewed energy to continue our journey together as a community over the next year.

Winston Roberts
For the PTFA Committee

TO END THE YEAR LET'S:

Share food, conversation and music on the green (beside the kindergarten) on the last day of School (Wednesday 16 December), at 12.30pm. Bring something to contribute to this celebration of our Community, instruments to play, food (cut fruit, pizza, cake etc). There will be sausages sizzling, including vegetarian. Communal blessings will be sung at 12:45pm.

Revolutionary Café and PTFA

Tena koutou katoa

One of the endeavours of our group is to gain a better understanding of how Waldorf education and kaupapa Māori can benefit from each other. At one of our recent Hui we welcomed Paul Denford, one of the pioneering teachers and parents, as our guest to share some of his thoughts and memories. We have summarized his korero and, with Paul's permission, would like to share them with a wider community.

"Knowledge of the higher worlds": Anthroposophy and Maori spirituality: Many of Rudolf Steiner's insights were gained through observations of the human being and nature. Take a tree for example: each of its seeds carries within itself the archetype of this tree which it has sprung from, and this dictates that the seed will grow into this particular type of tree. The seed just prior to germination goes into chaos, its life force kept in its etheric body. If we had spiritual sight we could see the tree in the seed's ether. Young children naturally see this and talk about it. This same understanding is shared by those who follow traditional Maori spirituality. Similarities between Waldorf form drawings and forms used in traditional Maori carvings and weaving are not a coincidence. In both cases, the forms are a connection to the inner world. There is a deep spiritual connection between what can be observed in nature and in human beings and what is alive in all of us.

Raphael House

Historically, the School land has known a lot of activity, with the important trails having been used by Māori in pre-European times and during the early periods of European settlement. Important landmarks are the stream at the foot of the School's hill (Wairere) and a spring near the old Pomare Homestead (which used to be in Pomare Road) which has now been closed over. In early European times horses roamed the hills. As they were slaughtered near the creek it was also known as Blood Creek, not a very pleasant image. However, the educational cultural aspect of our School contributes to an uplifting and enlivening for the land, so this could be our deed for the land the School belongs to.

During the School's pioneering years, one of Raphael House's earliest teachers, Margaret Love, rediscovered her Māori heritage. She was significant in forming the School's links with the tangata whenua. Margaret had connections with the Kokiri Marae in Seaview. This led to spiritual dialogue and connected the School with the Puketapu family, who were involved in education connected with the Te Wananga university movement. There was immense resonance and a lot of Māori families were

interested in and involved with the school.

However, subsequently the Kura kaupapa movement took hold and this saw many Maori families choose this Te reo immersion environment for their children. At the time, Raphael House pioneering teachers and parents were preoccupied with building the new home for the School. In hindsight, we could have been more persistent in explaining what Waldorf education has to offer to Maori families, and vice versa: the many movement activities, from drawing, music and rhythms, handwork and woodwork. Storytelling is a vital part of the Maori oral tradition. As Europeans, many of us have lost this art, and in mainstream education its value is not always realised. In Waldorf schools, storytelling is a key teaching tool, speaking to the children's imagination. In this and in many other ways, Waldorf education strives for what are also key features of Maori pedagogy, and there is much potential for each one to enhance the other.

Nga mihi o Te Kirihimete me Te Tau Hou ki a koutou
Season's greetings for Christmas and the New Year to you all!

Helen Emmerson & Kerstin Wagner
On behalf of Te Ropu Tautoko I Te Kaupapa Maori

TOY, CRAFT AND FOOD FESTIVAL NEWS

FANTASTIC NEWS

Toy, Craft and Food Festival earnings . A total of \$44,283.00 was raised from the Toy, Craft and Food Festival, and after expenses, \$14,437.00.

The money this year will be used in the Upper School for Data Projectors and leaving books for Class 12.

Fiona Angus
Treasurer, Toy, Craft and Food Festival

ANGELS IN THE GARDEN FESTIVAL



The Lower School classes celebrated the beginning of advent with our 'Angels in the Garden' Festival. The Festival Group would like to thank the Class 11 students who enacted the 'Annunciation' with Mary and Gabriel accompanied by their host of Angels so beautifully for the younger children. Class 7 students participated in creating a musical 'dawn chorus' and Lynn Vigrass provided musical accompaniment on the lyre which created a magical, awe inspired atmosphere.

The Festival ended with each class taking a flame from the Advent candle in the garden back to their classes. The warmth and light created in this festival is carried on in the classes with their advent wreath candles till the end of school.

Advent Greetings

The Festival Group



CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WELLINGTON

Special Advent visit - Rev Elke Baubles. Saturday 19 December: 8.30 am The Act of Consecration of Man 9.30 am Study Group: Luke 21 : 24 - 36

"Concerning - What do we perceive of the future of the Earth today (not global warming)"

5.30 pm Shared dinner at 13 Leary St followed at 7.00pm by a public talk

"How do we get true meaning into our Christmas celebration", then walking the Labyrinth at the Hutt Hospital.

Sunday 20 December: 9.30am Family gathering and The Sunday Service for Children (for children aged 7-14 and their parents).

10.30am The Act of Consecration of Man

12:00 mid-day Public talk & discussion

"How do we connect to the Angels of our Children or the Angels of other People"

PLUM GARDEN NEWS

We are now coming to the end of our first year at Plum Garden Parent Centre in Brooklyn, and all the programs are full and blooming like the garden! **HOLIDAY PLAYGROUPS:** Please email parenting @orcon.net.nz to come to a holiday playgroup session. They will be held on the mornings of January 19 to 22 & 25 to 29.

PLUM GARDEN PROGRAMS FOR 2010:

PLAYGROUPS: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings; please go to the website below to be placed on the waiting list. **PARENT COUNSELLING:** Mondays and Fridays all day, as well as Thursday afternoons; see the website to register, or call 04 972 4256 or email parenting @orcon.net.nz.

THE FIRST YEAR TOGETHER: The next step on from antenatal classes; this group begins in pregnancy and follows the first year together. Meeting every 2nd Saturday morning 10.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m. during term times, all year.

PARENTING 1-4 YEAR OLDS: 4 sessions in Term 1 followed by a further 5 sessions in Term 2; held every 2nd Saturday, 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. Starts Saturday 13 February.

PARENTING 4-12 YEAR OLDS: 4 sessions in Term 3 followed by a further 5 sessions in Term 4; held every 2nd Saturday, 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. Starts Saturday August 7th.

TALKING ABOUT TEENS: 3 Saturday morning seminars on July 3rd, September 25 & December 18. Ideally come to all 3. Mark your calendars and see the website to register. To see pictures of Plum Garden go to the slideshow on the website. www.PlumParentSupport.com

Have a joyful and peaceful Christmas and Chanukah, Mary Willow.

READING AND WRITING

It is Christmas day in the afternoon. The large family has gathered together, the children are playing outside, while the adults are having a lovely time catching up after a year of not seeing each other. The conversation meanders lazily like a brook from topic to topic covering a great deal of ground from gossip to serious subjects, from family to politics.

At this time it is about children and education. Jill, the warm hearted woman who married Jack two years ago, and now highly pregnant of their first child, becomes increasingly interested. She asks Ann, who has kept to fruit-juices while her husband Peter helped himself copiously to the Sauvignon Blanc: "Your children go to the Steiner School, don't they?"

"Yes", says Ann, "Ivan has just started Class One." An incredulous reply "Only now, he is almost seven, isn't he, why only now?"

Peter and Ann look at each other with a quick glance of recognition. They have gone over this subject many a time, in trying to explain to relatives and friends why they did not send their children 'normally at five' to 'a normal school'. They can explain it well as they have read a lot about Waldorf education and, more importantly, they have seen the positive effects of the curriculum upon their three children.

However, when the subject of reading and writing comes up, the tension within the family starts to rise, especially when the grandparents and 'aunt' Ethel, the retired teacher and family friend from Eketahuna, voice critical remarks.

"In Steiner schools they can't read and write until 7, or 8, right?"; "I don't know how you can justify that, isn't it actually like neglecting the children, really"; and "Didn't the Ministry of Education just announce that they are going to test the reading age in primary schools for that reason?"

Ann and Peter try to explain why in Steiner Schools this is done differently as well as at a later age, in fact with first learning to write before reading. The family is baffled. When asked, by Geoffrey who works in the Department of Statistics, to back that up with research, they find that difficult and can only point to research overseas in Europe.

However, at that moment Geoff, who has just graduated in educational psychology at Otago, comes to the rescue with "There is now actually excellent proof that school entry age of 5, 6 or 7 and learning to read and write earlier or later does not make any difference at all, when tested at age 10 and 11". He even produces from his pocket the following extract of a recent PhD research among almost 300 New Zealand children to prove the point.

"Do Children Experiencing Later School Entry and Reading Instruction Catch Up to

Children Who Learn to Read Early?

Sebastian P. Suggate, Elizabeth A. Schaughency, & Elaine Reese
Department of Psychology, University of Otago

One sentence summary: Children entering school and receiving reading instruction at either age five or seven showed similar reading performance by age 10-11 – even though large initial differences in reading existed.

ABSTRACT

Despite longstanding interest in the relation between school entry age (SEA) and later reading achievement, systematic and comparative longitudinal research in English speaking samples is lacking. We investigated the relations between SEA and reading development for 287 children in six schools with an SEA of five versus seven years, using a cohort-sequential design spanning the first six years of school. Hierarchical linear modeling accounted for receptive vocabulary, parental income and education, school community affluence, classroom instruction, home literacy environment, reading self-concept, and age. Reading and pre-reading development was monitored with the measures of phoneme awareness, alphabet knowledge, word reading, non-word reading, and reading comprehension. Results suggested that the initially large advantage in decoding and reading fluency scores associated with the earlier SEA was no longer evident by age 10 to 11 – even for readers in the lowest performing quartile.

Although not everybody in the family seems inwardly convinced, this appears to settle the dispute because the statistics and numbers have spoken with this research. The tension dissipates, the glasses are filled and the matter is settled. Oh, by the way, Jill had just enrolled her coming baby in a Steiner Kindergarten, and feels now even more reassured, which the baby seems to confirm with a firm round of kicking.

Wishing you a Christmas with great blessings and experiences,

René de Monchy

Aotearoa Summer Gathering

The World & I

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Dates: Thursday evening 21st January to Wednesday morning 27th January 2010.

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youthgathering@gmail.com

www.summergathering.co.nz

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

All copy, including advertisements, to be at the school office in written form no later than Tuesday 9.00 am the week of publication. Classified Advertising 'Buy, Sell or Swap' \$2-00 per week. Private enterprises and businesses: \$5-00 up to 4 lines (one column width); Non-profit organisations may apply for space. No flyers/inserts unless directly related to the school, anthroposophy, or Steiner education. Advertisements are placed at the discretion of the College. Publication does not imply endorsement of the activities advertised. Advertisements that contravene the Special Character of Waldorf Education will not be considered for publication.

CHRISTMAS TREES. Available now. Pots and cut trees. 147 Hill Road.
Phone Lyn 565 0354

GIRL'S OR WOMAN'S BIKE: Sarah Ulmer Brand SubTrak 1 medium size 35 cm frame, 26" wheel. 3 years old but in as new condition. Selling on Trade Me (listing 258889130) for \$425 but will sell to Raphael House family for \$400.00.
Phone Don 972 3010 or donj@actrix.co.nz

HOUSE SITTER NEEDED to look after our little Zen style house, cat, garden in Eastbourne January 8-25.
Phone Succino & Linda 562 7977

FOR SALE SUZUKI SCOOTER: 125cc "Epicuro" 2005 model, 3500 km only, with top box. \$2,000.00.
Phone Martin 565 4444

GREAT CHRISTMAS PRESENT IDEA. A lovely CD of classical, Spanish & South American music from Trio Con Brio (Violin, viola, classical guitar). Professional musicians Martin & Victoria are school parents and this is our CD. We'll donate \$5.00 from every CD sold to the School. \$25.00 or \$45.00 for two. Contact Victoria / Martin 565 4444 or Jaenecke @xtra.co.nz to order.

CHILDREN'S TOYS: 1 trampoline (3 x 2 meters), a scooter with air tires & handbrakes, a homebuilt trolley/go-cart (also with air tires). All in good condition and suit children 7 to 10 years. Free in return for a donation to the school. Must be picked up by Sunday 13 December.
Please ring Maarten or Lut at 977 0291

HOLIDAY HOME available for the Shool holidays at Te Horo Beach on the Kapiti Coast. Discount for school families. Email cpenman@clear.net.nz for photos and description or visit www.bookabach.co.nz/Te_Horo_beachhouse
Chris Penman Ph 566 4977