

“Get it sorted, God”

By Linda Grigg

When Heather Lamb felt God tell her that one day she'd be working with children, she was doubtful. Little did she know that, at the age most people retire, she would become a Parent Coach for Iosis Family Solutions.

“When God told me, I said ‘Yeah OK, God, get it sorted; I don't know anything about kids.’ I talk to God a bit like this! And, blow me down, my neighbour, who was renting the place next-door, was the process manager at Otara Child Youth & Family. She asked if I wanted to come and drive there. So that's how it started. And then I came into Iosis one day on a CYF-related job and they asked me if I wanted a job there too!”

Eight years later, Heather, aged 73, still works for CYF and Iosis, where she puts in around 15 hours a week as a Parent Coach. This involves teaching parents routines in the home. It could be as simple as getting children up, washed and dressed in time for school, or teaching the children to assist with chores.

“We encourage parents to come onto programmes. It doesn't have to be Iosis's programmes, but we always offer our ones, which are amazing – the Family Resilience Programme, Young Parents Group, Toolbox Parenting. Once they have done the courses, then we can re-evaluate.

“If they need to go to WINZ we will go along and stand as a support worker. If the children are involved in CYF, we give the parents a picture of what might be needed at

a Family Group Conference, and what avenues to journey down for the safety of the children.

“I feel God gives me the clients I am meant to be with. I try to give each of mine two hours a week, as I find this is sufficient for what needs dealing with at one time. We don't want them to become dependent on us. They can take up the strings of their own lives and move on. The joy is seeing them progress.”

Heather's association with Baptist organisations goes back a way. She was a registered nurse for Howick Baptist Hospital, and a weekend supervisor at the rest home there. She still keeps her hand in nursing, periodically volunteering with a group of Australian doctor friends in the South Pacific. An avid traveller, she also helps out wherever she spots an opportunity.

“I've been to Iran on my own, doing preventative health teaching. I was in Nepal on holiday and in the hotel where we were staying they were giving TB shots, so I asked if I could join in. I gave two weeks of my time there, doing the vaccinations.

“When I was in Agra, India, a couple of years ago I just went to the hospital and worked for the day. I have kept my registration up, and if you've got a form of ID and you make yourself known, they are grateful. In Agra I didn't do any medical stuff but I went around and spent time with the children, and did a bit of bandaging.”

Heather says it is the love of God which keeps her



Heather Lamb

coming to work every day and staying active, involved and alive. This is despite a slight disability caused by polio.

“Even though you recognise you are getting old and you mightn't be able to walk so well, there are still things you can do. And even if you are not paid for it, there are heaps of people who could volunteer, who could do things. I used to pray to God, ‘Show me your will. Where will I go?’ And I was running in circles. Now I don't have to.”

• *Linda is fundraising and communications co-ordinator for Iosis Family Solutions, the Baptist families ministry.*