

Fostering Values by Doing

Many of us don't live in the same town as our offspring and their children but skype, email and the old fashioned phone call means distance is no barrier to communication (and influence)..

Recently my ten year old granddaughter decided she wanted to write a speech on the endangered birds of NZ for her school speech contest. I believe this age group from 5-11years is a critical one in which to establish and foster the right values. She had some great ideas which I was able to affirm but there also arose the opportunity to talk about choices. *Why do we want to save our native birds? What can we do as young people? Why would we take our cats and dogs on holiday near a wild life sanctuary? What do we mean by the word sustainability? What is meant by unique biodiversity? How do feel about killing some animals to save others?* Great discussion over a few nights and great result! A gift membership of the Royal NZ Forest and Bird Society seemed an appropriate reward!

Parents and Grandparents have a special role in teaching values. I love these two pictures of our son teaching his girls cooking and gardening. All that goes with these lessons is so important. Whether it is weights and measures, handling skills or where vegetables and fruit come from.... these exercises promote the "grounding" of young people so that they feel connected to the planet we are all responsible for.

In December 2012 I was a recipient of a Hamilton Civic Award for services to the environment and the arts but the person whom I felt had made an immeasurable contribution to *Teaching Values by Doing* was Mrs Avis Leeson.

Read her citation below:-

Hamilton Civic Award 2012 recipient Mrs Avis Leeson

Mrs Leeson's community spirit and involvement with Red Cross has seen her commit hundreds of hours of her time to helping young people develop their gardening talents.

A retired music teacher, Mrs Leeson was the 2009 Waikato Gardener of the year, and she has added her green-thumbbed skills and passion to 54 schools across the Waikato. She plants fruit trees and vegetable crops, sharing her knowledge and enthusiasm with children she firmly believes should be taught to grow their own feed - just as she has for decades. Worm bins and compost are part of her earthy repertoire, and her background in education allows her to quickly develop positive relationships with the children she works with.

Waikato schools are richer, greener and healthier places through the tireless efforts of Avis Leeson, a Civic Award winner in the Environment category.

And a word in favour of Community Gardens or Building Urban Resilience

Organic NZ March/April 2013 contains an article about the exponential growth of community gardens throughout NZ, especially disaster – wracked Christchurch. Some benefits....

*“.....gardeners & their gardens are having a valuable impact on public health, social cohesion & ecological sustainability indicators in their neighbourhoods.....there is good evidence from North American studies * of the ways community gardens can act as ‘solution-multipliers’ to complex, interconnected urban problems such as*

- ✓ *Ensuring food security*
- ✓ *Sourcing a healthy diet close to home*
- ✓ *Integrating new migrants into society*
- ✓ *Keeping the young employed and the elderly active*
- ✓ *Transforming organic waste into nutrients*
- ✓ *Low energy & financial inputs”*



