

ROTORUA Weekender

HIDDEN ODDITIES



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Back in the family again

Group supports families

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Lorna and Geoff Hurihanganui never dreamed they'd be raising a primary school-aged child in their 50s.

But the couple, two of the many grandparents and kincarerers looking after someone else's child, say while it's not the life they expected, their eight-year-old grandson Adrian is the light of their lives.

They have been raising Adrian since he was two months old.

When Adrian came in to their life they were both working and Lorna was running a busy cafe. Their jobs now fit around Adrian's life, but Lorna says it's hard.

Adrian bonded strongly with his "koko" Geoff, when he was a baby, when Lorna was up early getting ready to go to work at the cafe.

"We're lucky. Most of our group are nanas on their own — some are looking after up to eight grandchildren. Some are in rented accommodation after having to sell their home."

They belong to the Rotorua Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) Trust support group.

It isn't just for grandparents, and anyone who is raising someone else's children can be in the group, Lorna says.

"Some people find it very hard, but they are so supportive — helping with baby sitting,



BEACON OF LIGHT: Lorna and Geoff Hurihanganui with their grandson Adrian, 8, and are one of many Rotorua grandparents and kincarerers raising someone else's child.

PHOTO/BEN FRASER

friendship, advice and supporting one another."

The couple, in their 50s, have no social life and never dreamed they would be in this position.

"You just live day-to-day," says Lorna.

"He's the luckiest boy and we tell him that every day. He's a happy boy."

"That's what our organisation is about — comradeship and children. It's a great support group. Kids are very vulnerable —

you've got to look after them."

Statistics New Zealand say the number of grandparents and kincarerers looking after someone else's child has doubled in the last 10 years and the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) Trust is asking people to share their story.

The survey focuses on social and economic issues impacting on the thousands of full-time grandparent and whanau caregivers who are raising some of

the most vulnerable children in New Zealand. National field officer Sheree McKenzie, who is based in Rotorua, encourages anyone who is a grandparent or raising someone else's children to take part.

She says kincarerers is a growing phenomenon and the Bay of Plenty has one of the highest incidences in New Zealand.

"Our families are largely unrecognised and under supported — the families that fall outside of

Child, Youth and Family (CYF) have even less support than foster families/children — it's time to hear their voices."

In the 2013 census, more than 9500 families had grandchildren/mokopuna being raised by their grandparents, great-grandparents and other kin. Many are looking after their children day and night.

■ The survey closes May 31. Go to www.grg.org.nz and look for the blue survey arrow or ring 0800 78 78 75.

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