INTRODUCTION

In 2011, Kidsfirst Kindergartens were ready to celebrate 100 years of kindergarten in Canterbury and Westland when the third major event in Canterbury’s tragic series of earthquakes put everything on hold, with a 6.2 that effectively destroyed the central city of Christchurch.

The tragic events of Pike River on the West Coast meant that neither region was really in the mood for celebration.

A couple of years later we made the decision to resurrect the centenary.

Activities and work that had been paused were started once again - and the kindergartens and our communities rallied around the concept of Kidsfirst being 100 Years Young.

A special effort was made to integrate all the activities into the normal running of our kindergartens so it was an added overlay.

We were mindful of not being intrusive upon our teaching programmes or of overloading our teachers - yet we wanted to acknowledge what a special time this was.

We refocussed the newsletters and leaflets we produced to show our heritage.

Perhaps most significantly, we produced a beautiful commemorative book tracing our history.

From the interviews for this book, we also managed to create a short video of some personal reflections on kindy in the years gone by.

Our schedule of events brought old friends back to our local kindergartens, joined our network together with across-the-board activities like Balloon Day and Vintage Car Day - and of course our own Quiz Night on the Association’s history.

While ever mindful of not being extravagant, we wanted to do justice to the legions of teachers, students, volunteers, supporters, parents and children who had made us what we are today.

We tried hard to find things that were fun and inclusive - that brought people together; inspired them to think and reflect; and, in the process, raised our profile within the community.

Driving around the city on Balloon Day, you couldn’t help but see our flags and balloons showing their cheerful colours to everyone.

But it was the willingness to be involved, to join together in a very special spirit of celebration, that was the greatest outcome we could have hoped for. To have such a positive response from all involved was truly heartwarming - and a fantastic tribute to the ideals of kindergarten and how relevant they still are today.

We’re delighted to share our centenary with you and hope you get some of the same enjoyment from looking back on our journey as we had making it.
Part of the challenge of a year of celebration is getting everything to co-ordinate in a cohesive manner that's not too subtle, nor too overt.

Bringing together the kindergartens, encouraging a sense of community, celebrating the past while staying focussed on the present - all while keeping everything in perspective. It's a balancing act of not too little but not too much.
A mini brochure outlining the history of Kidsfirst Kindergartens was produced as a handy giveaway. It was designed so the kindergartens could pin two up together to form a continuous timeline from 1911 until the present day...
At the beginning of the year, a special edition newsletter was produced to be used as a giveaway during 2013, and even beyond.

It chronicled some of the teachers’ voices, how things had changed and what was truly important - at the very heart of kindergarten and Kidsfirst.
OUR BOOK

To mark our centenary, the Kidsfirst Board decided to produce a limited edition book chronicling the history of the Canterbury Westland Kindergarten Association.

It features every one of our kindergartens, the voices of those passionate about our kindy story, collects together photographs and anecdotes in a single source and provides an entertaining coffee table read.

As well as all that, the book provides a wonderful introduction to who we are and where we have come from, for anyone new to our organisation.

It is helpful when talking to new business associates or politicians, influencers or advisors. It simply establishes our size and credibility.

For new staff, it reminds them that we are a professional organisation with a proud history and a sound reputation of which we are extremely protective.

And, very importantly, it curates material now, before it is lost over time, or discarded by accident, or destroyed in a quake.

It is a record of (to paraphrase the words of Dr. C.E. Beeby, Director of Education in the 1940s) “something we thought worthwhile”.

KIDSFIRST KINDERGARTENS
... Despite these changes, the spirit of kindergarten never changes. It is the same spirit which inspired that small band of women, nearly forty years ago, to lay the corner stone of the association. The association is all belonging an association which has been dedicated to the interest of children throughout the years as it is dedicated to the children of today.

The history of the KIDSFIRST Kindergartens is a history of growth and change. From its humble beginnings, the association has evolved into a dynamic organization committed to providing high-quality early childhood education. Throughout the years, KIDSFIRST has adapted to the needs of children and families, always striving to offer programs that are responsive to the latest research and best practices in early childhood education.

In this book, we celebrate the achievements of KIDSFIRST and the dedicated professionals who have worked tirelessly to ensure that every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential. We hope that you will find inspiration in the stories of success and resilience that are shared here.

Thank you for being a part of the KIDSFIRST community. Together, we are shaping the future of early childhood education.
As a side project from our commemorative book, some of the interviews conducted as research were compiled into a short video. These snippets provided an interesting, personal perspective on the last 100 years of the CWFKA. Alongside former teachers, presidents, and life members were the current Kidsfirst board, talking about the future.
BOOK LAUNCH CHCH

A copy of our book was given to each of our kindergartens during a special series of roadshows conducted by the Chief Executive.

These were personally delivered before it was made public, as an advance copy.

It was officially launched by Christchurch Mayor Lianne Dalziel at a function for invited guests including local politicians, Ministry of Education representatives, former Presidents and friends of the Association, the Kidsfirst Board and many others.

All those attending received their own copy of the book.

The reaction to the publication was uniformly positive, with extremely complimentary comments.

Shown above, the invitation to the event, to the right, Christchurch Mayor Lianne Dalziel with Kidsfirst Board members Fleur Howard (to the left), Susan Sheperd and Louisa Steel (on the right).

Below, Kidsfirst Chief Executive Sherryll Wilson chats to former Patron of the CWFKA Carol Eggleston and longtime teacher (now retired) Diana Weir.
Our successful Christchurch book launch event was followed by a similar event on the West Coast.

The invite list included past and present teachers and those who had been involved in the kindergarten movement in Westland.

Present was Laurie Hall (left in the picture to the right) with his wife, and daughter Tracey – who is a teacher at (and went to) the kindergarten he helped to found. He’s shown here with the book and below, planting a tree at the opening of what would become Kidsfirst Karoro.

A copy of our commemorative book was given to the West Coast mayors and others in attendance and was met with delight and many warm reminiscences.

Grey District Mayor Tony Kokshoorn even recalled having to mow the local kindergarten’s lawns each weekend.
Throughout the year, we looked for ways to involve everybody who wanted to join us in our celebrations.

Our participation rates were incredibly high. People loved being part of the fun - especially after the hard times that had hit our regions.

The most exciting aspect was perhaps how creative people were in finding ways to show their pride.

Our programme of events was very carefully designed to let our kindergartens add their own distinct personality to whatever they were doing.

Our most sustainable kindergarten even found a way to turn Balloon Day into a recycling/re-use message!

The idea was to let the kindergartens do as much or as little as they wanted, when and how they wanted - but providing them with ample tools and ideas to stimulate and foster involvement.

There were floats in the Christmas parade, special community birthdays, seed plantings, lots of signs and wall displays, dress ups and so much more.

Tying it together in the second half of the year, was the 100 Days of Kidsfirst Kindergartens.

Over the course of the ‘100 Days’ there was a real flurry of activity and a wonderful sense of being part of something big and exciting.
Throughout the 100 days, emails were sent out daily with interesting facts, there were 'Starter Packs' for each term with ideas of things to do and resources such as posters and Visitor's Books, and special days for the Kidsfirst Kindergartens network to celebrate together - such as the highly successful (and very visible) Balloon Day and Vintage Car Day.

Kidsfirst Kindergartens launched a special event for the last two terms of the year, called '100 days of Kidsfirst'.

As a way to commemorate the centenary, there were a raft of activities for the kindergartens tied into the celebrations.

How much or how little the kindergartens participated was up to them - but the overall response was incredibly positive.

Staff were invited to a Quiz Night based on the heritage of Kidsfirst, and on Founders' Day, the kindergartens sent thank-you cards for the Head Office team at a surprise afternoon tea, held at the oldest kindergarten in the network.

There were more than 100 ways, many creative and diverse in nature, in which the kindergarten community came together to help us celebrate.
To kick off the 100 Days of Kidsfirst, ‘starter packs’ were prepared for each of the sixty two kindergartens. They came in a special, reusable calico bag and contained ideas and suggestions, resources and teaching aids.

Each of the starter packs was hand delivered to the Head Teacher and the team - with the first being presented by Chief Executive Sherryll Wilson at Kidsfirst Sunbeam - the oldest and ‘first’ kindergarten in the Kidsfirst network.
The Starter Packs provided some great tools for our kindergartens. There were ample copies of our special 100 Years Young newsletter, the fold out timeline brochure, a series of 6 posters depicting different eras of our kindergarten story, the set of cards with our 100 ideas and a ‘teaser set’ of balloons.
In the Starter Pack that was distributed on the first of the 100 Days of Kidsfirst, there was a set of 100 idea cards, with suggestions for fun things to do that tied into the concept of being 100 years old. There were old games and nursery rhymes, ways to make things, wear-a-hat days and other quirky suggestions and thought-starters to get the teachers and the children involved.
The ideas cards sparked a lot of activity around the kindergartens, with many choosing at random from the pack and pinning the card up with photos of what they did.

Teachers reported back that children loved being able to choose a card and direct the activity.

They found the range of ideas (from games to old nursery rhymes, simple tasks to more elaborate creations) easy to incorporate into their teaching.

Many suggested a generic set of cards would be a good idea and even helpful to parents.
100 views of our Kindergarten

photography by our tamariki

We are celebrating

100 years of Kindergarten
Kidsfirst Kindergartens’ Quiz Night was one of the first events of the 100 Days of Kidsfirst.

It was a social event, a learning experience and a great opportunity for kindergarten teachers to mix and mingle.

The tables were decorated with daffodils out of respect to the Daffodil Day kindergarten fundraisers of the past, in milk bottles (next to apples) to symbolise the old milk & apples programme.

94.8% of kindergartens took part in our quiz night.
The Kidsfirst Quiz featured questions about the history of the kindergartens, the heritage of the CWFKA, the decades from the past 100 years, how life has changed and some child-related fun.

There was a huge turnout of teachers with overwhelmingly positive response (and requests to repeat the night).

Not only did everyone seem to enjoy themselves, many teachers commented on how proud it made them to be part of such a strong association and how they’d learnt so much!
QUIZ NIGHT
JUST LOOK HOW FAR WE’VE COME...

It was with a great deal of excitement that our Associates moved into their new location in 1990. They were surrounded by new friends and a new sense of purpose. Today, Kidsfirst Kindergarten is a thriving organization that has grown to serve over 10,000 children each year. Despite the challenges that come with running a successful early childhood education program, we’ve learned that the key to success is working together as a team.

We’re also celebrating the 100th Day of Kidsfirst.

Kidsfirst kindergartens have a history of providing quality education to children for over 100 years. The first kindergarten was established in Germany in 1837 by Friedrich Froebel, who is often credited with inventing the concept of kindergarten. The idea of a kindergarten was based on the belief that children of all ages should have access to a formal education.

The 100 Days of Kidsfirst is a celebration of this history and the continued success of these programs. Each day, we’re highlighting a different aspect of the history of kindergartens and the successes of our Kidsfirst kindergartens.

For each of the 100 Days of Kidsfirst, we prepared an email to greet teachers as they arrived at their kindergarten each morning.

They varied greatly from historical information to fun facts, anecdotes to children’s jokes from the past - there was something for everyone, every day.
Today is Beeskin Day in Christchurch, and from an early hour in the morning sellers of honey will offer their fragrant wares in the square, and its immediate environs. All day yesterday the flower market was at work among the flowers, and at the Art Gallery sales of pictures were kept busy baking and arranging the golden blooms.

For the emailers, some interesting facts were collected, and every morning the teaching teams turned up to a new email featuring a story or piece of information we hoped they'd enjoy.

Introducing
Your Child to Kindergarten

Compiled by Mr. Wilson, E. D. T., Christchurch
Drawing by Mr. White, R. D. T., Christchurch

"The hope of a nation lies in its children."

E. A. Pople
Acting President K.I.T.
Interesting snippets of information, fun facts, anecdotes, some historical background, photographs and memorable stories were collected into a series of easy to read emails that went out to our teachers for each of the 100 days.

Media and the Kindergarten

In the 1996 Annual Report, General Manager Sherry Wilson wrote of a media issue that had gotten out of hand. The publicity had been caused by an Easter treat gone awry when it was sided upon by the news media.

One single event during 1996 characterised the difficulties faced by community service organisations such as ours in relationships with the media. Hot cross buns, fuelled by media comment, the public were left with the impression and belief that it was kindergarten policy to ban crosses and other religious symbols.

Read the Reporter’s Diary accounts from The Press in June 1995.
A Kindergarten Morning in 1942...

This morning, our kindergarten may be filled with the sound of children laughing and playing or they may be sitting in the playground, singing, talking, or playing games. Back in the days, things were not so different.

For many decades, Kindergartens have been the starting point of many learning journeys, but also because the children love it. Happy, engaged children are an essential part of learning.

97.2%
opened our most read of the 100 emails
How do you create awareness in the community, give everyone something easy to do and foster a few thousand smiling faces?

Our answer was Balloon Day.

Based on an idea that came from our Kidsfirst Hokitika kindergarten who tied 100 balloons to their boundary fence back in 2011.

It’s inexpensive, colourful and so easy to do.

Of course, our kindergartens came up with some great ideas.

There were photoshopped pictures of children floating away with the balloons, the number 100 made out of balloons, archways and long lines of multi-coloured visual excitement.

Added in, to make it even more involving, was a Balloon Day facebook competition, with the number of likes for the kindergarten determining the winner.
Balloon Day was held across Kidsfirst, with every kindergarten or early learning centre receiving a pack of a hundred especially branded balloons.

Fences and rooftop lines were adorned, there was a riot of colour across the whole city. People stopped and looked as our kindergartens showed everybody that we were proud to be celebrating 100 years of kindergarten.

Some kindergartens made the number 100 out of the balloons. Others tied a line of 100 balloons to the fence on the street. Some took to their local parks with the balloons, while others put them up indoors.

Wherever you went, there were balloons galore!
What do you do with 100 used balloons?

Kidsfirst Lincoln came up with some novel ideas.

The kindy is proud of its efforts to stay “green” and its focus on sustainability.

They filled their balloons with playdough and created some great squishy stress balls.

You can always count on kindys to turn absolutely anything into a great creative opportunity!
As a trial, Kidsfirst Kindergartens started its Facebook page during the 100 Days of Kidsfirst - in a slow and cautious manner, letting the number of likes and comments grow gradually as parents and friends discovered the page.

Stories and news was regularly posted as part of a Kidsfirst Connected programme - which also involved a short term hosting on the curatorial Shuttlerock service - for those who couldn't access Facebook on their computers.

It also hosted competitions and interactive content - what are the things you like most about kindergarten?

For Balloon Day, the kindergartens were asked to send us photos we could put up, for parents to judge who was best.

Virtually every one of our kindergartens participated in the Balloon Day competition - with Kidsfirst King Street being named the ultimate champions.
One of our suggestions from the 100 ideas card pack was that of tying ribbons to remember onto a tree.

Over the course of the 100 days many kindergartens did this, often with spectacular results. The trees in their gardens, or hedges along the fence line weren't just adorned with new growth or beautiful blossoms, but spectacular ribbons too.
Let there be cake!

It wouldn’t be a true kindergarten celebration without cake!
The children baked, the parents baked, the special guests baked, Head Office staff baked - and other people bought theirs!
But the results were delicious. Whether it was a hundred cookies at Kidsfirst Wigram or three cakes to make 100 at Kidsfirst Hornby, a special treat or old fashioned high tea at Birmingham Drive. What a tasty way to make such an achievement.
In November, we organised Vintage Car Day as a celebration that would unite the kindergartens and early childhood centres.

A fleet of dozens of vintage cars took to the streets of Christchurch to visit all the different kindys in spectacular style... often with special guests on board.
KIDSFIRST KINDERGARTENS
KIDSFIRST KINDERGARTENS

VINTAGE CAR DAY
VINTAGE CAR DAY
As our vintage car fleet took to the streets of the city (and out into the country areas), special guests climbed aboard. These were people who had been chosen by each of the kindergartens as meaning something to them. Some were ex-teachers, one was the kindy cleaner, there were local business owners – but all claimed a special connection to the kindergarten or early learning centre.

There was a little girl who had been sick with cancer who came back to the kindy, community workers, three generations of one family – all kinds of people. They weren’t celebrities, they were the local heroes.
Chief Executive Sherryll Wilson enjoys the fun at Kidsfirst Wales St, on Vintage Car Day 2013.
Our second Starter Pack, delivered after the term break, came with an Archive Box for the kindergartens to fill up. This was then collected by the special guests on Vintage Car Day.

Some kindergartens put in photos, others wrote about life today and their teaching practices, drawings were a favourite, even seeds, favourite toys - and so much more.

These archive boxes are now safely stored at Head Office to be opened sometime in the future.
TIME CAPSULES

What Kidsfirst Kindys put in their time capsules
Instead of a Vintage Car Day, our kindergartens on the West Coast got together for a trip to ShantyTown to relive the past - with each kindergarten sporting a different colour for ease of identification.

Above and right, the three West Coast kindergartens visit ShantyTown for a trip back in time.
Throughout the year, there were traditional public relations and media releasing - especially focussed around local community papers and establishing links between these newspapers and their neighbourhood kindergartens.

The stories were as diverse as the kindergartens themselves, with good coverage spread across the regions and during many months.

Kindy turns 100

Kidsfirst Kindergarten pupils Hayley Reading (Greymouth), left, with Harry Swinburn (Karoro) and Max Johansson (Hokitika) helped celebrate the organisation's centenary, at Shantytown on Friday. It was the first time all three kindergartens had visited the park together. The Canterbury Westland Kindergarten Association became an incorporated society in 1911 and centenary plans were made for 2011 to celebrate the milestone, but were postponed due to the Canterbury earthquakes and Pike River Disaster.

Teddy time at kindy

Kidsfirst Telford Kindergarten celebrated its 50th birthday last Friday in style with a teddy bears picnic in Shandon Park.

Students and staff all took along a favourite teddy bear to the event and the "teddy dance" was a highlight of the day. The event also celebrated the Kindergarten's head teacher Rosemary Roofe being at Kidsfirst Telford for 30 years.

"It's a really great Kindergarten to be a part of and a wonderful community," she said.

"It seemed fitting to have a teddy bears picnic for our birthday, it's sort of an old fashioned thing in a way, something that one of our kindies might have done 50 years ago!"
LIFE MEMBERS HIGH TEA

To celebrate with the Life Members, a special high tea was held.

Chair of the Kidsfirst Board, Jan Forsyth, presented all those present with special hard-cover copies of the Kidsfirst book, which was poured over in great detail.

The high tea was such a success that the Life Members of the Association requested that it be considered an annual event where they could catch up with what the kindergartens had been doing and stay firmly connected to Kidsfirst.

It was an opportunity for some of those who had played an important role in the story of Kidsfirst Kindergartens to be recognised for their contribution.
To commemorate the day on which the Associated was officially founded, we organised a treat for the Head Office team who keep the wheels turning behind the scenes.

In secret, we sent out an email to all our kindergartens asking them to do a card of thanks for all the hard work and support from Brimingham Drive and the Education Service Managers.

The team themselves had no idea, until minibuses turned up to take them to our oldest kindergarten for a welcome by the children, cupcakes and coffee, and a sea of thank you cards.
Every kindergarten has a story... sometimes a whole fist of stories!

There's so much to tell about the last hundred years that we couldn't start to do it justice. What we can do, though, is tell a few of the little stories that help to make up the big picture.

Take a look at some of the interesting things that have happened in our kindergartens since 1911, right up to 2011. There's always a lot happening at kindy.

There's more happening everyday, as you can see in our kindergarten stories, reflecting life in our various kindergartens today.

You can read about the 'tip of the iceberg' here. Some of the remarkable and warningly inconsequential events of the day that add up to create the rich legacy that has been kindergartening in our kinder over the years.

Click on the kindergarten for a link to a piece of their own history...

In recent years Kidsfirst Kindergartens have gone through tough times and challenging times.

Kidsfirst has overcome many challenges, and has sought opportunities and taken them. Indeed, it has evolved itself as an organisation.

To continue with our success, we must continue to be bold, while being prudent. We must always focus on our core values, always value our most important resource - our people - in all the various roles that they perform.

Above all else we must demonstrate a PASDCA that is all that we do.


History pages were added to the website, with a series of general pages outlining the Association's history (and timeline) as well as an individual page for every kindergarten. These pages told that kindergarten's story and put it in context of the era in which it was opened or described some of the interesting things that had occurred in its past.
To wrap up the year of celebration, another newsletter was produced, looking back on all the achievements, the fun and colour and excitement of the 100 Days of Kidsfirst Kindergartens.

It is envisioned that this will be a publication that can be used to show the rich heritage, depth and creativity that kindergarten has to offer - showing our teachers and children embracing everything that is so good about professional early childhood education.
A couple of years ago, to kick off the centenary celebrations that would be halted by the earthquakes, Kidsfirst Kindergartens held a special long service lunch to recognise staff and the time they had spent at our kindergartens. Some had claim to more than 35 years as a teacher with us. Each staff member was given a special perspex trophy in the shape of one of our brand silhouettes, a certificate of service and a poster with everyone’s name on it.

None of them had any idea the lunch was happening, as they were led to believe it was going to be a professional development day - a nice surprise!

After a great start it was a shame that everything was put on hold...
A series of pull up banners was produced, each covering a 25 year period for use at events and within the kindergartens, to help tell our story. Each used one of our ‘heritage’ colours to differentiate the time periods.