



“It’s all about celebrating doners and the community workers who are at the coal face of charities mahi”
- Give a Kid a Blanket

Give a Kid a Blanket (GaKaB) is a registered charity and an art project founded by social artists, Bernie Harfleet and Donna Turtle Sarten.

In the beginning, GaKaB was about exploring the practice of ‘Community Activated Art Action’, but with its growth it has now become a ‘Community Action of Kindness’. Social art, after all, aims to inspire social impact and change, and for this duo, GaKaB really is art imitating life.

The project came about as a response to the cold and damp housing conditions that so many families in Aotearoa experience.

Since 2015, GaKaB have gifted over 60,000 blankets and over 40,000 care items to children and their families across the Auckland region, including hot water bottles, toiletries, and clothing. They accept items donated either brand new or in excellent pre-loved condition.

These goods are donated by community members, sorted through, and then allocated to families in need with the help of community and social service providers. These providers include the Police, refuges, social and community workers, and public health nurses who make requests on behalf of their clients.

The relief of poverty and the social issues that surround it is a cause that remains close to the heart of this charity. For Bernie and Donna, it’s all about families knowing that they are cared about and valued by the wider community.

GaKaB, in fact, has no direct contact with recipients, who remain anonymous. Rather than focusing on the recipients, which GaKaB feels can be victimising, the focus is instead on the acts of kindness from the community.

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GaKaB is also non-profit and is completely reliant on the sheer energy of volunteers alone, with up to 100 volunteers helping over the busy winter months.

Apart from providing blankets and objects of warmth to families, GaKaB has two other main focusses. All year round they make up ‘family care’ packs for the intensive care units at hospitals in Auckland. These packs go towards families who have loved ones being looked after in ICU.

“In these situations families don’t want to head home and they need resources that allow them to stay in the family waiting area, and these packs can help”.

The second focus is supporting the Waitemata Police with their initiative ‘Operation Star’ which collects toys and food items to support families over the holiday season. Part of this initiative includes a food pantry that the Police and others can access over the same period when many organisations are closed.

To find out more about the inspiring and heart-warming mahi of GaKaB, visit their [Facebook page](#) which has over 12,000 page followers, and features an array of photos celebrating the patchwork of community generosity.



Photo: Bernie and Donna of Give a Kid a Blanket