



Seeking a brighter future after serious injury

Personal tragedy provides platform for helping others

“Have faith and patience, be positive and surround yourself with people who love you.”

Former New Zealand super-heavyweight boxer Peter Williams, and his wife Charmeyne Te Nana Williams, will never forget those words.

They were spoken to Peter over the phone, shortly after he'd awoken from the coma he lapsed into after suffering a brain haemorrhage during a New Zealand championship bout in Timaru in 2002.

The voice at the end of the line was Michael Watson, the inspirational former British boxer who captured the world's attention when he fought back from near death in the ring, to eventually complete a London marathon.

Michael's words were a beacon of hope for Peter, who not only had a serious brain injury but was also facing a future without the use of his arms and legs.

The words would prove to have ongoing resonance for Charmeyne, too. As a result of her husband's post-injury experiences, Charmeyne decided to set up her own business providing care for people with serious injuries. And Michael Watson's belief in the importance of 'being surrounded by love' essentially sums up the philosophy of her company, 'Whatever It Takes Home Based Support Services'.

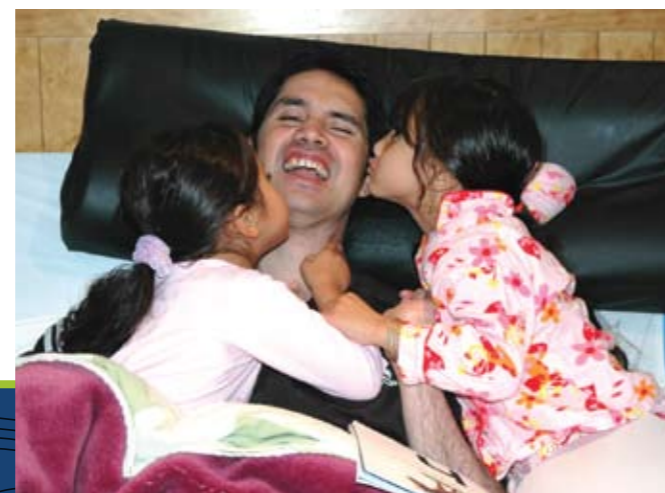
“Our approach revolves around the concept of

whanau,” says Charmeyne. “It's so vital to create an environment that's conducive to healing, and involving all whanau members is the key to creating that environment.”

Charmeyne's personal and professional experience in the field of serious injury recently saw her become a member of ACC's Serious Injury Advisory Group, which was set up in April 2008.

The group consists of 10 members, who meet regularly with ACC to advise on ways it can better serve and support its seriously injured clients.

Each member was nominated because they have extensive networks they can tap into, to provide ACC with feedback on its policies and services. The group is also representative of the major regions, ethnic groups, types of serious injury etc.



Charmeyne, who is connected with the 'New Zealand Carers Alliance' and 'Aotearoa Maori Whanau Carers Network', represents the interests of both Maori and carers on the group.

ACC's National Serious Injury Services Manager, Liz Cairns, says “The Advisory Group is part of wider efforts ACC is making to better understand the needs of seriously injured clients, and improve the services offered to them.”

Maori make up a disproportionate number of clients with a serious injury, so the aims of the Advisory Group overlap with the goals of ACC's Maori Access Strategy, which is all about understanding and serving Maori better.

“Maori represent around 12% of the population, but they make up 24% of seriously injured New Zealanders,” says Paula Snowden, ACC's Director, Maori and Community Relations.

Paula says it's important to find out the reasons for this, because then ACC can develop targeted injury prevention strategies to tackle the roots of the problem.

“One possible reason is that serious injuries often result from car crashes, which particularly affect younger male Maori,” says Paula. “Another reason may be the proven link between alcohol consumption and accident and other injury.”

Paula says ACC is working hard to learn more about the experiences of Maori following a serious injury, and is receiving valuable help from Charmeyne and the Advisory Group.

An area where Charmeyne feels there's room for improvement is the level of understanding of tikanga among carers who provide services to Maori clients.

“Maori have many cultural practices that are important to them, and observing these can make a big difference to the relationship. Just little things like remembering to take off your shoes before entering the house, using a separate flannel for the face and body, etc”

Ensuring staff have a high level of cultural competence is something Charmeyne focuses on in her own business, which she anticipates will employ around 150 staff nationwide by the end of 2009. Of course, she also spends as much time as she can with twin daughters Safena and



Honey, and husband Peter, whose fighting spirit has seen him defy more than one doctor's prognosis.

“We were initially told that Peter wouldn't survive his injuries. But six years on he's regaining his speech, and has excellent controlled movement in his body. He has also travelled overseas and is coaching waka ama, one of his long-time passions.”

That, says Charmeyne, is proof that with willpower, a lot of love and whanau support, the future after a serious injury can still be bright.

Information about ACC's Māori Strategy is available from the Māori development team. Email: Maori.development@acc.co.nz For more information about what help you and your whānau may be able to get, visit www.acc.co.nz or call 0800 101 996

