

# Exciting times for Motueka School

Kelly Deeks

The Motueka Rudolf Steiner School community has big plans underway to build a brand new campus for their school and they are finding creative ways to fund and resource the project. The independent school is currently located in an old rented villa that served as the town's maternity hospital for many years.

Four years ago, the school trustees decided to find a new and bigger home for the school, 'We're a bit full, and we're at the stage now where we need to move to grow again,' says project manager and former board of trustees chairman Peter Garlick.

The dream was for a purpose built Steiner school integrated with a productive organic farm. Acting on the advice of philosopher Johann Goethe, "Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now," the trustees appointed Peter to run the project.

And he's never had a job like it before. "Instead of a job description, I had a vision and a quote from Goethe," he says. "There was no plan, no office, no money, no budget, and no salary. But I love a challenge, and I love the vision. Surprisingly, there are very few farm-based schools in New Zealand."

About 15 sites were inspected and rejected before the perfect spot was found – 13.6 ha of rolling hills, mostly in sheep grazing but also a 1.5 ha pear orchard. There are two cottages, a dam and lake, 1.5 ha of flat land by the road, an elevated building site with a pond and spring, and most of the land is north facing and near Motueka. "It is perfect" Peter says.

Having raised about \$ 100,000, there was a big difference between the market value of the farm and the school's funds. Peter began contacting previous and potential donors hoping to close the gap and to his surprise and delight, was able to raise the necessary funds.

"That was an amazing experience," he says. 'I learned about putting relationships and connections first, I learned to trust that good things will happen, and I learned there are some amazing people who see money as a tool to make good things happen'.

The school community wants to restore the farmland with thriving ecosystems that provide both food and habitat for people and animals. Running in parallel with the farm development is the job of designing, fundraising, and building a school. The design brief ensures the farm and the spaces between the buildings are just as important as the indoor classrooms.

"The community have their hearts set on creating beautiful handmade adobe buildings," Peter says. "The more people that roll up their sleeves and help with the buildings and gardens, the bigger and stronger our community will be.' However, it could easily take 10 years to build six classrooms and an administration building by this method. The creative solution is to start with yurts, portable kitset structures, which can then be replaced one-by-one with permanent adobe buildings. The new school will accommodate 100 students, which is twice the size of the current school.

The community want to start the first adobe building at the start of 2017. They are appealing for volunteers, donations of building materials and funds.

[www.motueka.steiner.school.nz](http://www.motueka.steiner.school.nz)