


**WHANGAREI**  
**YOUTH SPACE**

**Are you aged between 12 and 24 years old? Then this is your space, join in the fun**

Whangarei Youth Space is a safe and fun place where you can meet friends, get involved in what's on, find a mentor, join in school holiday activities, access free, private, youth health services and get training and employment support.

**How you can contact us at Whangarei Youth Space**

Email: [contact@youthspace.co.nz](mailto:contact@youthspace.co.nz)  
Phone: 09 972 7248  
Text: 021 765 838  
Fax: 09 972 7249  
Post: PO Box 1483  
Whangarei 0140  
[www.youthspace.co.nz](http://www.youthspace.co.nz)

Youth health enquiries contact a nurse on 021 756 724

Like us on Facebook:  
Whangarei Youth Space

**Octane**  
youth health

Supporting young people to live healthy lives

## "Every young person has meaning. They have a place. They are a treasure, they are taonga."

Asaeli has a passion for seeing change occur for youth.

After a violent period of his life during the earlier years of high school, it was a peer mediation course at the school that taught him about conflict resolution, the power of the voice and led him to a motivation to change.

"In this course they showed us films about conflicts around the world and how they turned out badly, when if each side could have heard from the other side and figured out what they had in common they could have gone forward."

Asaeli realised that making a change out there meant first making change within himself.

"I realised I had to do something."

When he heard a powerful speech by his close friend at Nga Manu Korero in 2016, it made him see things that were going wrong from a cultural perspective as well.

"I started to see how slowly, but surely, Maori identity is coming second to gang identity in some young people, so we have to make the culture strong again, so people can grow up strong in it, instead of the gangs.

"If we don't do this, Maori culture could be wiped out."

These experiences influenced the direction of his life.

He is the first in his family to complete high school. He graduated in 2016 and he has taken the past year to explore how to form a career helping young people.

Through this search he has been selected as a member of the Youth Space Board of Trustees and Whangarei District Council's Youth Advisory Group.

Taking part in a youth hui at Youth Space earlier in the year brought a moment of realisation to him. Someone who had not talked about his worries or concerns in the past, when he talked about his problems at this hui, lots of other young people related.



*Young Asaeli Moala Pene of Ngati Kuri, Te Rarawa, Te Aupouri, Ngapuhi seeks to strengthen young people's relationship with their culture*

"Being judged by adults, discriminated against because of the colours you are wearing. When you dressed tidily for a meeting and they think you are in gang colours and write you off. Being told work should be more than just something to do for money, but then being told to take any job or lose the benefit, being targeted, branded, lots of things like that.

"When I told people about the work I am doing here they didn't believe me at first, so I got them to ring the Youth Space and it made a big difference.

"Based on my experiences I think more youth advocacy is needed in Whangarei.

"One adult on your side can make a big difference. Youth workers here can do that. They just walk alongside you. They show us good habits like getting places on time, being respectful." Building a connection with older people has been part of his training at Youth Space. Through his role as a Youth Trustee he has been part of a Youth Adult Partnership programme, learning about the business side of the

Youth Space and travelling to Auckland with board trustees for governance training.

"It's a lot of work, making sure flow charts work and columns tally, getting things set up the right way for fund raising."

It is all part of building the foundation for the next part of his life, giving back to his community and making a difference for young people in Whangarei.

Next year Asaeli will begin a Bachelor of Applied Social Work, the next step towards his goal of one day becoming a social worker.

Meantime, there are things to address right now, and one of these is how to break through to young people who feel very alone in the world.

His three pieces of advice to any young person who is going through bad times is to, "talk, talk, talk."

"Always talk. Please!

"Start talking. I always kept things to myself. But when I started to talk I found there were people I could trust. I found

Youth Space last year through my cousin, and I read about the Youth Advisory Group in the paper.

"If someone you know is in a bad place, back them up through everything and remember that the Space is here to help."

Asaeli is the eldest of four children, the big brother, so he is forging a path for the children in his own whanau.

"My five-year-old sister is already telling people about the Space and she can't come here for seven years yet.

"There are lots of helplines and national organisations you can call but Youth Space is right in the middle of Whangarei. You can come here."

To parents, friends and relatives he says, "talk to them. Make sure they know that they're loved. It's important. There has been too much loss in the past few months. Ensure that they know that they matter.

"Every young person has meaning. They have a place. They are a treasure, they are taonga."

### Helplines for children and young people

Youthline – 0800 376 633, free text 234, [talk@youthline.co.nz](mailto:talk@youthline.co.nz) or [www.youthline.co.nz/services/goforward/go-chat/thelowdown.co.nz](http://www.youthline.co.nz/services/goforward/go-chat/thelowdown.co.nz)  
email [team@thelowdown.co.nz](mailto:team@thelowdown.co.nz), free text 5626  
or free text / phone 1737 anytime for support from a trained counsellor

### Help for parents, family and friends

Commonground – [www.commonground.org.nz](http://www.commonground.org.nz)  
Parent Help – 0800 568 856  
Family Services 211 Helpline – 0800 211 211  
Skylight – 0800 299 100