

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 25, 2012

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Getting Results Fighting Drug Use in New Zealand

The Church of Scientology partners with the Maori Wardens of New Zealand to help slash drug use and possession offenses as much as 22 percent over two years.

Alarmed by soaring drug use in New Zealand, Rita Peters, Public Affairs Officer of the Church of Scientology of Auckland and coordinator of the Truth About Drugs drug education initiative, teamed with Maori Wardens to take action.

Working to ensure the safety and security of youth and the community as a whole, Maori Wardens are men and women who work as volunteers under Te Puni Kōkiri, the Ministry of Maori Development.

According to a study in the October 2012 issue of *Neurology Today* published by the American Academy of Neurology, a decades-long study

that tracked more than 1,000 New Zealanders from adolescence into their late 30s found those who began smoking marijuana before age 18 and continued the habit into adulthood lost an average of eight points of IQ.

One among many serious side-effects of cannabis abuse, this statistic is all the more alarming when viewed against United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime Report of 2011 which ranks New Zealand third in cannabis use globally. Cannabis is used by an estimated 13 to 17 percent of those age 15 to 64 in this country of 4.4 million where the black market cost of marijuana alone is an estimated \$98 million USD (150 million New Zealand dollars) annually.

Peters introduced the Church supported Truth About Drugs program to Mr. Thomas Henry, chairman of the Maori Wardens in Mangere, a suburb 15 km south of Auckland City Center. Together, they organized a series of drug education lectures for Mangere Maori Wardens who brought the program to 13- to 15- year-olds in local Maori community centers.

The program consists of **13 fact-filled booklets**, high-impact public service announcements and a riveting 100-minute documentary, **Real People—Real Stories**, in which former addicts describe the devastating effect drugs had on their lives. Scientologists made the materials available to the Maori community free of charge.

The impact of the program spread, and it was adopted by Maori communities throughout New Zealand: Otahuhu, Manurewa, Turehou, Waitemata, Otara, Tirohanga, Murupara, Rotorua, New Plymouth and

Thames in the North Island and Blenheim, Motueka, Greymouth, Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill in the South Island. This was flanked by distribution of some 450,000 *Truth About Drugs* booklets in cities throughout the country during the 2011 Rugby World Cup, when Maori Wardens were joined by Scientology volunteers to get the booklets into the hands of the fans.

The Chief Advisor of Maori Affairs acknowledged the results: "Distribution of you're the *Truth About Drugs* booklets across the country in the hundreds of thousands has helped bring about a reduction in drug-related crime over the past two years, with as much as 22 percent decreases in drug use and possession offenses."

The Church of Scientology has published a new brochure, *Scientology: How We Help—the Truth About Drugs, Creating a Drug-Free World*, to meet requests for more information about the drug education and prevention initiative it supports. To read a copy of the brochure or to learn more about the drug education program, visit the **Scientology website**.

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Scientology Founder L. Ron Hubbard wrote, "The planet has hit a barrier which prevents any widespread social progress—drugs and other biochemical substances. These can put people into a condition which not only prohibits and destroys physical health but which can prevent any stable advancement in mental or spiritual well-being."

The Church of Scientology sponsors the Truth About Drugs, one of the world's largest nongovernmental drug education and prevention campaigns. It has been conclusively proven that when young people are provided with the truth about drugs—factual information on what drugs are and what they do—usage rates drop commensurately.



New Zealand Scientologists in partnership with the Maori Wardens have distributed some 450,000 *Truth About Drugs* booklets in cities throughout the country.