

# THE HOUSE of Hearts

*A man with a big heart and a big house has made a desperate plea for people to open, not close, their doors on people with experience of mental illness.*



far removed from that. 'Usually, tangata whaiora very politely hear "sorry, no vacancies at the moment", and it's at this point that my front door bell at Ashworth House starts to ring. If I have a room available it is offered to whoever comes to the door, provided that they meet the criteria I have in place that makes Ashworth House a safe, clean place for anybody to live in.'

Wayne said he has a strong belief in the edict that people should be treated 'the way we would ourselves like to be treated. And I think deep down that same edict exists in every single one of us. So why are there only two places in the whole of Gisborne prepared to actively take in people with a mental health background?'

The answer, he says, is quite simple. 'It is because the prejudice, ignorance and social stigma that has existed all this time is still alive and well in our society – even today. But the good news is that it's not as bad as it used to be thanks to increased mental health awareness and the work of Like Minds.'

The solutions, he said, lay with the 160 people in the room. 'Every single person here has a voice, just let it be heard. Be an advocate whenever and wherever you can for tangata whaiora. The more we are seen to be treating and accepting mental health consumers as everyday people in our society, the easier it is going to become for our people to lead normal lives.' ➤



Wayne Fouhy is not afraid to speak his mind – 'Everyone has a voice, just let it be heard'.

**W**ayne Fouhy owns Ashworth House in Gisborne, a boarding home that offers accommodation to anybody who needs a room, including people with experience of mental illness. But due to ill health, Wayne will soon sell his establishment and is worried that what he offers now may not be available in the future.

Guest speaker at Turanga Health's Awards for Respect ceremony, he highlighted the chronic shortage of proper accommodation for people with experience of mental illness.

Wayne is a three-time nominee and two-time winner of a Like Minds Award for Respect – for showing sustained respect to people with mental illness. He is one of the few general accommodation services in the area that welcomes service users.

'Apart from the interim places of accommodation run by mental health professionals, what else really exists out there in the community without prejudice, without bias, without stigma ... that actually says "welcome" and how long are you wanting to stay?' Those are the words that others hear when they walk through the doors of a house of accommodation.'

The reality for tangata whaiora, he says, is