

Kindergarten centenary celebrated

Mrs Marjorie Connell, aged 82, will be one of the guest speakers at the Wellington Free Kindergarten Graduates Association five-yearly reunion this weekend.

The gathering will mark the 100th year since the opening of New Zealand's first kindergarten in Dunedin in 1889. Wellington had one three years later.

Mrs Connell began her training in 1924 and her first job was in a kindergarten at the Brooklyn Church Hall. She admits to having been attracted to the profession through her fondness of children.

"My sister and mother both taught primary school, so it seemed to follow on that I would go into teaching," she said.

In the early 1950s Mrs Connell was appointed assistant principal of the Kindergarten Teachers College. She retired in 1964.

As well as looking after countless children, Mrs Connell found time to raise four of her own — something she could not have done without the help of friends, neighbours and "a supportive husband."

She has few regrets about her career but considers kindergarten teachers to have been under-valued for a long time.

"We were never very well paid when you consider the amount of physical and mental strain we've had to put up with." The reunion has attracted 176 registrations, including two from Australia and one from the United States.



Mrs Marjorie Connell, aged 82, a guest speaker at the Kindergarten Association reunion this weekend, who considers kindergarten teachers have long been under-valued.