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**Electra**

A weekly feature on the  
communities in  
Horowhenua & Kapiti

# Caring for Our Community

## This week's feature group – Age Concern

Age Concern New Zealand is a not-for-profit, charitable organisation, dedicated to promoting the quality of life and well-being of older people.

In Kapiti the Age Concern offices are situated upstairs in Coastlands and provide a range of services designed to assist older people and educate the wider community. The team, headed by services manager Maurie Dean, provides services and advocacy for older people in Kapiti and education on positive ageing for the wider community.

Rachel Murcott says her role involves dealing with the growing issues of elder abuse and neglect.

"This can be financial, emotional or physical abuse. It can be professional neglect with people not getting the services they are entitled to or it can be self-neglect. Our role at Age Concern is to investigate any referrals and work towards positive outcomes.

"We act as a service liaison, calling in other agencies as they are needed and assisting people in need. It can be a struggle for older people and for families to know what services are available and to know they are not alone.

"Sometimes we have people reluctant to call when they see an older person they believe is in need of help but I always ask them "What would you do if it were your own mum or dad?"

"Even if a circumstance turns out to be nothing we'd rather know. We don't encounter many extreme cases of abuse or neglect but sometimes by working with an early referral we are able to prevent a bad situation from becoming extreme."

Part of Ms Murcott's role is to visit rest homes and retirement villages to talk to staff. "Education and preventative action are very much part of my role."

Caroline Biss is the Accredited Visitor Service coordinator for Age Concern in Kapiti.

"My responsibility is training volunteers to become accredited visitors to isolated or lonely people in the community.

"I first visit any client referred to me to assess their needs then match them up with a visitor who will have something in common with them. There are also follow-up visits a few weeks later to ensure that the partnering of client and visitor is working.

"The visitor calls on the client for about an hour each week. The visitors role is not to do the ironing or the washing but to provide company, share conversation and take an interest in the person. They might read to the client for a while if reading is difficult, or talk about issues of the day, hobbies or interests."

"Around 95 per cent of all older New Zealanders still live in their own homes," Ms Murcott says. "Often they are isolated by physical issues but are still highly functioning adults who welcome the opportunity to spend an hour with another adult one on one."

The visitor service complements the role of families and health professionals and can also provide much welcome support for relatives of the person.

"The accredited visitor service often builds long-term friendships between the visitor and the client but it also has a useful role in the short term when people are temporarily isolated by illness or recuperation from an operation and benefit from having a visitor once a week for a few months."

With between five and eight new client referrals each

month, Ms Biss is very keen to have more volunteers to train as accredited visitors.

"The commitment is to an hour a week visiting time and we try to team you up with someone in your own area to avoid travelling time and costs.

If you wish to volunteer as a visitor or to contact Age Concern for any reason, phone the Kapiti office on (04) 298 8879.

The Horowhenua Elder Abuse and Neglect Service of Age Concern operates from the Palmerston North office, phone (06) 355 2832.

## Adventure of the week



### Paekakariki Rail and Heritage Museum

Displays relate to European settlement, history of the rail in the area and the encampment of the 30,000 US Marines during WW2. Located at Paekakariki Railway Station, open 11am to 3pm at weekends

## Business Breakfast

Wednesday 3rd November 7.30am  
SOUTHWARDS MUSEUM

Speakers: MICHAEL & DAVID QUIGG  
- Employment Law Relations  
(Quigg Partners)

RSVP: Heather Meads 04 904 5757  
heather.meads@kapiticoast.govt.nz

## Trees and Powerlines

Properly planted and maintained trees can improve air quality and beautify our community. However, trees placed too close to power lines create fire and safety hazards and cause power outages at the most inconvenient times.

Electra owns and maintains the Kapiti-Horowhenua electricity network. This includes clearing trees and other vegetation that may encroach upon our overhead power lines and equipment, and pose a risk to your safety and service reliability.

### Reasons to prune trees

1. To prevent unsafe conditions and potential injury  
Trees conduct electricity and create potential safety hazards when branches grow too close to power lines. For example, an unsuspecting child could climb an overgrown tree, come in contact with a live power line and risk electrocution.  
Trees should be pruned periodically to maintain proper clearance for overhead power lines. But use the experts and phone Electra first on 0800 567 876.
2. To maintain a reliable electricity supply  
When tree branches come in contact with power lines, they can cause power outages or fires. This usually happens in windy and stormy weather when we most need electricity.

**Thinking of planting near a power line?** Before you plant a tree, get the facts. Find out how the tree will look five, 10 or even 50 years into the future. Knowing what height a tree will reach at maturity will help you make the right decisions now.

### Overhead power line safety

Directional pruning is healthier for trees than "topping" or "rounding" tree growth, limits the need for additional future pruning, and keeps branches a safe distance from power lines.

Never attempt to prune trees near power lines yourself! If you see a tree growing into power lines that are between two power poles and want to have it evaluated for pruning or removal, call Electra on 0800 567 876.

### Underground Cable Safety

Accidents involving contact with underground electrical cables can not only damage equipment, but also cause serious injuries and even death.

Also if you damage an underground cable while digging, you may be liable to Electra for the damage caused. To avoid damage, locate underground power cables before you begin digging by calling Electra on 0800 567 876.

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