

WINTER 2019 QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER
www.ageconcernnt.org.nz



Age Concern Nelson Tasman

Serving the needs of older people

ACTIVE SENIORS NELSON TASMAN



Paige Gill from Waimea College
and Leslie Hubber

**We have spaces available on our Tea & Tech
sessions. Details on page 4**

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OFFICE HOURS

8.30am - 4.30pm Monday to Friday

We are grateful to all our funders:



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Previous quick solution

Across 6. Broaden 7. Embed 9. Rob 10. Slaughter 12. Blockbuster 15. Awkwardness 17. Ham-fisted 19. Fan 21. Abuse 22. Traipse.

Down 1. Droop 2. Fad 3. Dell 4. Emphasise 5. Referee 8. Turban 11. Blow a fuse 13. Cerise 14. Swear by 16. Pause 18. Earn 20. Din.

Words from the Chair



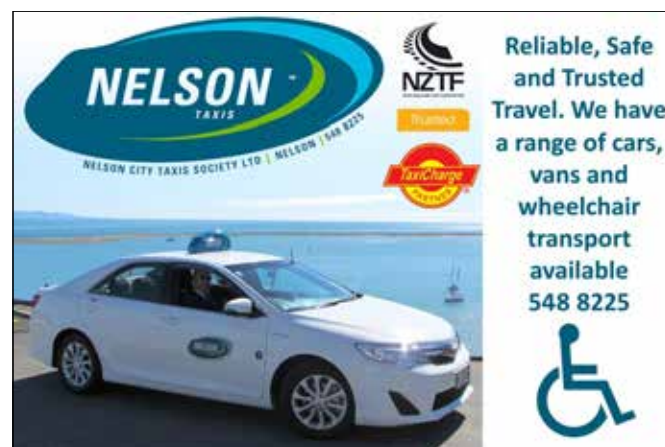
Dear Age Concern friends and readers, Caroline, Marrit and I were recently in Wellington for the Age Concern NZ annual conference and AGM. It was a happy and constructive event this year, and it was a pleasure once again to represent the Nelson/Tasman region. Several times we heard how much we here are respected for all that we do and all the innovations we have made. We may be a small branch (compared to some) but we are a branch with attitude!

At the opening of the Conference, the Minister for Seniors, the Hon. Tracey Martin, announced that a new revised strategy for the care of older people, would be announced within the month. This may have a big impact on the Positive Ageing Forum, which is a local clearing-house for the sharing of information.

Now that we have taken over the lease for the whole of the building at 62 Oxford Street, your Board and Management Team are seeking funding to upgrade the premises, which is long overdue. We want to make it a place where the senior members of the community feel safe and at home, and share friendship and fellowship. We will keep you informed as this project moves forward.

With the onset of Autumn, soon to be followed by winter, the days are drawing in and the extremes of each day are tangibly cooler. I hope that you manage to keep yourselves warm and healthy and that the annual heating supplement from the government will go some way in helping you to achieve this.

Take care.
The Very Reverend *Charles Tyrrell* QSO
Chair of the Board of Age Concern Nelson Tasman Inc.



IT'S DRIVING MISS DAISY'S 10TH BIRTHDAY!

This May marks a ten year milestone for Driving Miss Daisy. We are New Zealand's first and largest companion driving service and we have been committed to helping older people stay social, active and independent since 2009.

With ten years' worth of hard work and dedication, owner's Melanie and Jack Harper have been successful in establishing Driving Miss Daisy as a trusted and loved brand, giving people the freedom of independence within their community. Driving Miss Daisy is now established all over New Zealand with 73 franchises, from Invercargill all the way up to Kerikeri in the North.

"We are so proud of what we have achieved and all of the people that we have helped along the way. Thank you to all our Daisies - franchise owners, drivers and partners. Thank you to all the wonderful clients we have enjoyed helping, spending time with and making friends with - here's to another decade of making a difference in people's lives!"

Melanie Harper, co-founder Driving Miss Daisy.

As people get older and their situations change, it can be hard to get out and about, socialise or simply manage basic errands. Driving Miss Daisy provides freedom, independence and strong social connections for those who need it. Our Driving Miss Daisy, 'Daisies', provide transport as well as companionship to clients ranging from supermarket shops, to doctors' appointments, or simply accompany them for leisurely activities whether grabbing a coffee or going on a group day trip.

We hold the companion driving service contract with ACC nationally and we are accredited under the Total Mobility Scheme which provides discounts on Driving Miss Daisy transportation services.

It is important to stay socially active and if you would like to find out more about our services please call us to discuss - we look forward to hearing from you.

Editorial supplied by Driving Miss Daisy

Driving Miss Daisy your companion and your driver!



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Nelson West
Phone: (03) 541 0020



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Meet the staff

Manager, Caroline Budge



Caroline has been with the agency for nearly 5 years, and is relishing the challenge of managing the team as they continue to grow and provide much needed services for our older community.

Elder Abuse Response Service Advisor, Mal Drummond



Mal continues in this vital role as we continue to deliver our Elder Abuse Response service. Older people can find themselves in a vulnerable situation quite suddenly and we're here to offer support and advice to whoever needs it.

Accredited Visitor Service Coordinator, Registered Social Worker, Susan Arrowsmith



Susan looks after our AVS and Carer Relief services, both of which use valuable volunteers from within the community, and offer companionship and friendship to those seeking some more social connections. We have now expanded services into Golden Bay.

Community Support Coordinator Marrit Walstra-Russell



In her varied role, Marrit really enjoys meeting people in the community through taxi assessments, Tea & Talk, community events or general enquiries.

AgeConnect Coordinator Breffni O'Rourke



Breffni is very busy in her role, working on a variety of projects that help build friendships and encourage community connection.

Fundraising and Communication Officer Miriam Clark



Miriam is busy working in all aspects of fundraising and fine tuning our communications and branding.

Tea & Tech Spaces Available

Is your cellphone, laptop, or tablet a bit of a mystery? Tea & Tech can help. It tackles your tech hurdles such as texting, emailing, uploading photos into an email, downloading apps, operating Google maps, facebooking your family, and figuring out how to download newsletters.

We have had a great start to Tea & Tech this year and are delighted with the number of students who have signed up as youth volunteers. So far we have held six sessions with young people working 1:1 with an older person to upskill them on digital technology. Each session is facilitated by a trained AgeConnect volunteer and has no more than 10 student volunteers and 10 over 60's. Sessions last for one and a half hours maximum. Tea & Tech is also supported by ANZ who volunteer a team member to answer questions around understanding how internet banking works, Pay Wave, online shopping and how to avoid being scammed. An equally important component of this is the meaningful interaction between the young and older age groups and the opportunity to learn from each other.

Currently, these Tea & Tech sessions are held at retirement villages in the Nelson Tasman region. Eventually we will establish community sessions but until then we are extremely excited to **offer two community places at each of our monthly sessions at The Wood, Summerset in the Sun and Oakwoods. Bookings for these spaces are essential so if you would like to attend or know someone who does please let Age Concern know.**

We are also very pleased to have extended our group of student volunteers and now have Waimea College and Nayland College on board as well as our existing group established last year via the Nelson Youth Council. Thanks so much to Nayland and Waimea Colleges for your support.



Darren from Nayland College and Barbara

Please contact Breffni at Age Concern on 544 7624 ext 5 or ageconnect@ageconcernnt.org.nz for more information or to make a booking.

Elder Abuse Awareness Week runs from 15-22 June every year



Elder abuse and neglect is a serious issue in New Zealand as it is likely that 70,000 Kiwis aged 65+ will experience elder abuse and neglect each year. More than three quarters of alleged abusers are family members. This means that their adult children and grandchildren are abusing thousands of vulnerable older people across the country. Elder abuse is NOT OK but it is OK to ask Age Concern for help. If you suspect an older person is being abused please get in contact with Age Concern Nelson Tasman on 5447624 or call the elder abuse helpline on 0800 32 668 65. Here at Age Concern Nelson Tasman we are very fortunate to have an experienced and very knowledgeable Elder Abuse Advisor. Each year he works with approximately 100 cases both for those who are in abusive situations and those living in self neglect, and provides professional and empathetic support to them.

At Age Concern Nelson Tasman we have a number of events planned for Elder Abuse Awareness Week. We are starting the week, 15 June which is Elder Abuse Awareness Day, with a sausage sizzle at Mitre 10 MEGA Nelson. This is a great chance to raise public awareness of Elder Abuse and how to access help. We will also be having a purple morning tea at all of our Tea & Talk locations in Nelson, Victory, Richmond and Motueka during the week. So please feel free to come along and wear purple if you wish. For more information, contact Marrit on 5447624 ext 4 or community@ageconcernnt.org.nz

What Should You Do If You Suspect Abuse?

- Believe the person/kaumatua's story
- Let them know there are services that can help them
- Support them to be safe and accept help.

Shone & Shirley Funeral Directors

At Shone & Shirley, we provide sympathy, understanding and caring guidance throughout the funeral arrangement process. Our purpose is to help each family tailor a funeral for their loved one that is unique, personal and true to the person who has passed, reflecting their life, personality, beliefs and culture. We are there to support and assist your family in anyway we can, caring for your loved ones as if they were our own.

In times of great transition, Shone & Shirley Funeral Directors will put your needs first. Traditional or contemporary but always memorable, dignified farewells.

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Free Public Talk

The Process of Downsizing and Moving Home

Come along to a free information session with Senior Move Managers where you will learn some of the best tips and tricks for when it comes to downsizing and moving home.

When: Thursday 30th May
2.30pm

Where: Richmond Library
Constance Barnicoat Room

TOPICS COVERED

Planning
Sorting / organising
Decluttering
Packing
Moving home

Afternoon tea provided

Moving home can be a difficult process to navigate, but the experts at Senior Move Managers can help you right from the planning stages through to the set up of your new residence.

Whether you're moving into a retirement village or simply downsizing, this information session will be packed with info and tips and tricks on how to make the process more manageable and stress free.

Getting exhausted at the thought of downsizing?

SENIOR MOVE MANAGERS CAN HELP

Senior Move Managers specialise in assisting older adults and their families with the emotional and physical aspects of relocating home. We plan, advise, organise and monitor all aspects of the moving process to reduce the burden on and ease the stress of the move.



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to see how we can plan and manage
your move from start to finish
www.seniormovemanagers.co.nz

Summer Activities Series Review

'I love how organised and informal this is, please continue.'

Our Summer Activities Programme for Seniors exceeded expectations. We were very pleased with the number of people turning up and enjoying these free activities. Nearly 300 people attended our 18 sessions which were held in a range of parks and reserves across the region, including Nelson, Richmond, Motueka and Golden Bay. Three were cancelled due to the rain and while we were a little disappointed to cancel them, we were happy about the rain.

The sessions offered a 'taster' of six different types of activity: Tai Chi, Edible and Heritage Walks, Outdoor Sing-a-longs, Guided Walks, Guided Bike Trail and a Mobility Scooter Guided Trail. This programme of activities meant we were offering a wide range of options for older people including:

- the opportunity to try a new exercise like tai chi,
- educational opportunities around local heritage and the environment (the edible and heritage walks),
- something physically challenging yet achievable (the guided walks or biking trails)
- something fun, upbeat and for those who are less mobile (sing-a-longs led by a local choir).

Our choice of venues also meant we were using 15 different Nelson City and Tasman region parks, reserves, walks and clubs, thereby exposing older people to places they might not have been to. Tai Chi was very popular and well attended. The benefits of Tai Chi were felt immediately with one person stating 'I was rushing to get here but as soon as I started my body calmed down.'

Our sincere thanks to the Nelson City Council and the Tasman District Council for supporting this Activity Series for older people in the Nelson Community. We hope to run this series again in 2020.



How Tai Chi Became An Integral Part Of My Life

When I first heard of Tai Chi, I bought a book about it. Forty years on, I attended two taster sessions organised by the Nelson branch of Taoist Tai Chi as part of Age Concern's Summer Activities Programme.

Just from those first 17 moves, I knew that this was what my poor, stiff, painful body needed! Gradually, through a series of beginner and continuing classes, my body has unfolded and opened up. It is such a joy to be able to move freely, without pain.

The slow, intentional movements of Tai Chi that exercise every part of the body have been just what mine needed to feel the joy of being alive after many years of constant pain. The bonus has been getting to know the wonderfully diverse group of people who make up the Tai Chi classes.

Holding taster sessions in the parks made it so accessible with the opportunity to just have a go with no commitment necessary. Once I joined and started classes, the absolutely non-judgmental attitude of everyone made it easy to keep going, no matter what.

My memory is not great, but I have simply relied on muscle-memory and that's been sufficient. Tai Chi has been so beneficial for my body and I now have a new lease of life and look ahead with confidence to the years to come.

by Lynda



SpinPoi

– Save the Date

We are incredibly excited to be bringing SpinPoi to Nelson. Dr Kate Riegle van West, founder of SpinPoi, will be in Nelson on 15 and 16 August to deliver a series of hands-on workshops. The finer details such as time, place and cost are not yet confirmed but full details will be in the next magazine coming out early August, on our website and in our monthly e-newsletter.

What is SpinPoi?

Most of you will be familiar with poi and its origin in Maori culture as well as its traditional use to train strength and flexibility. In recent years poi has gained popularity around the world, with poi of all shapes and sizes being used for play, performance, and self-expression.

Poi has a unique set of characteristics that make it a particularly good tool for improving health and wellbeing. It is simple, affordable, and accessible, and encourages a state of flow or “being in the zone”. Poi can be done anywhere, alone or with others and best of all, poi is fun! In addition, scientific research has proven that poi is good for both the body and the mind.

..... save the date

15 & 16 AUGUST

Poi for your Health

Age Concern Nelson Tasman and SpinPoi are teaming up to present a series of hands-on workshops around poi as a therapeutic intervention in aged care.

SPIN POI

Age Concern

More info coming soon...

A clinical study conducted by Dr Riegle van West at the University of Auckland among adults over 60 years of age revealed significant improvement in grip strength, balance and the ability to sustain attention after one month of lessons. These results are exciting, especially when thinking about quality of life as we age. Maintaining balance in old age is of utmost concern, as falls and fear of falling are major health problems for older adults. Grip strength is an important predictor of overall health, including bone mineral density, likelihood of falls, general disability, and cause specific and overall mortality in older adults. Sustained attention, or the ability to maintain or focus attention over a period of time, is a fundamental cognitive ability that plays an important role in everyday functioning. In addition to the scientific data, participants were asked how they felt while doing poi. The most frequent comments were feeling more loose and flexible, enjoying the challenge of learning a new skill, and having fun!

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Please contact Al on (03) 547 6867
www.tasmanrh.co.nz

Sing Yourself Well!

Do you enjoy singing or being around people who are singing? Then come along to Age Concern's latest initiative. We have started a singing class, to be held weekly in the Age Concern Hall. You don't have to be an experienced or confident singer, just enjoy the experience and benefits of singing. Sessions are run by Ruth Collingham and start at 10am with a cuppa and chat to limber up those vocal chords. This is followed by around an hour of singing. Ruth has a real passion and joy for singing and wants to share this with her community. Studies have shown singing can improve health and wellbeing, and Ruth witnessed this when working in Wellington with several different community groups. The Sing Yourself Well sessions are designed to be relaxed and lots of fun for singers and non-singers of all abilities.

If you would like to know more about, 'Sing Yourself Well' please contact Marrit on 5447 624 ext 4, or email her community@ageconcernnt.org.nz



Tea & Talk Update

Have you been to one of our Tea & Talk sessions yet? They provide a weekly opportunity for those over 65 years to get together for a cuppa and a chat. Tea & Talk runs in five locations across the Nelson Tasman region from 10am to 11.30am and costs up to \$3. A delicious morning tea is provided. Locations are listed below:

Age Concern Hall | 62 Oxford Street, Richmond
Every Wednesday

Victory Community Centre | 1 Totara Street, Nelson
Every Monday

Elma Turner Library | 27 Halifax Street, Nelson
Every Friday

Gateway Housing Tust | 24A Tudor Street, Motueka
Every Wednesday

Anglican Parish Hall | 42 Commercial Street, Takaka
Second Wednesday of Every Month

For more information please contact Marrit at Age Concern on 544 7624 or community@ageconcernnt.org.nz

Friendly, local Total Mobility (TM) provider for personalised transport

Freedom Drivers Nelson, run by Sheryl Greenwood, brings a warm and friendly driving service right to your door.

“As a Total Mobility (TM) service provider, we provide TM discounted transport so make sure you let us know you have a TM card when you enquire,” says Sheryl. “Some residents may not realise that we provide the TM service which was previously known as the ‘taxi chit’ or voucher system,” she adds.

“We specialise in providing safe caring transport and assistance for our senior citizens. We cover a wide area including Nelson, Richmond, Wakefield and Motueka but will also travel further afield to pick up those living out of the main urban areas,” says Sheryl.

Service is personalised and Freedom prices are comparable to (and often less) than standard taxi but with lots of extras.

Call Sheryl directly now on (03) 539 4856 or 021 355 843.

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For more information

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Nelson Denture Clinic

We are happy to announce the Nelson Denture Clinic will be lead by our new clinician, Thomas Gu. Thomas has studied and worked at the Otago University's Faculty of Dentistry in Dunedin for over 10 years. He has led various departments in removable prosthetics including partial dentures, full dentures, implant supported prosthetics, and orthodontic appliances. In addition, he has worked at a private clinic in Christchurch, for 4 years. As a result, Thomas has an extensive and wide array of experience from complex and highly specialised hospital cases, to the conventional dentures and prosthetics.

With the combination of specialised expertise and his down to earth and friendly demeanour, Thomas and his team are looking forward to provide you with the finest quality dentures that are comfortable, functional, and aesthetically pleasing, to give you your natural smile back.

To make an appointment for a complimentary, obligation-free consultation, phone Margaret on (03) 548 1478.

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Nelson Denture Clinic

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- Implant assisted dentures
- Immediate and replacement dentures
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- Total professional care for denture patients

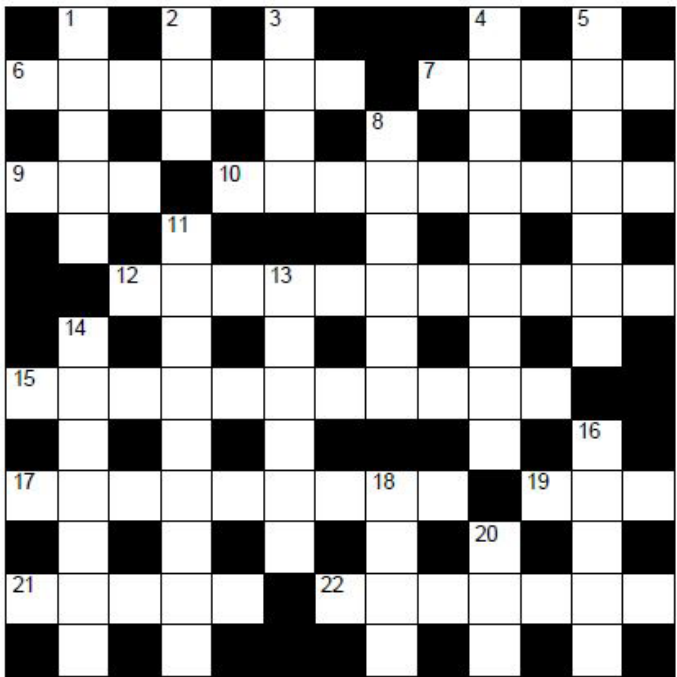


NZ made by NZ registered and qualified dental technicians

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35 Waimea Road, Nelson
www.nelsondentureclinic.co.nz

Quick crossword

(Answers on page 2)



ACROSS

- 6. Expand (7)
- 7. Implant (5)
- 9. Bungle (3)
- 10. Butcher (9)
- 12. Smash hit (11)
- 15. Self-consciousness (11)
- 17. Clumsy (3-6)
- 19. Groupie (3)
- 21. Making an older person's decisions for them (5)
- 22. Plod (7)

DOWN

- 1. Sag (5)
- 2. Craze (3)
- 3. Small valley (4)
- 4. Accentuate (9)
- 5. Sports official (7)
- 8. Head dress (6)
- 11. Lose your temper (colloq) (4,1,4)
- 13. Light red (6)
- 14. Have confidence in (5,2)
- 16. Hesitate (5)
- 18. Merit (4)
- 20. Racket (3)

21 Across: If a family member or carer takes decisions out of your hands or disregards your wishes, it's elder ABUSE & it's not OK. What is OK is seeking help. Call 0800 32 668 65 for free, confidential support. Brought to you by the Office for Seniors.



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NOW AVAILABLE IN

MOTUEKA



How We're Doing

During the months of February and March we conducted a public survey relating to knowledge around Age Concern Nelson Tasman and its services and some of the issues facing older people in the region. This acted as a follow up to the survey we conducted in 2017 which highlighted loneliness and social isolation as key issues among older people in the region and lead to the creation of AgeConnect. We were interested in gathering feedback on Age Concern's activities but also to see what they key issues were now, two years later.

The responses came online via survey monkey and the form in Age Concern's last Magazine. Of those responding there was a range of ages from 55 to 92 and people lived across the Nelson Tasman region.

Are there any other events or activities you think Age Concern could provide?

- Connecting with the smaller resthomes and visiting those in hospital care.
- More services in Golden Bay
- A mystery drive, some sort of dance type keep fit class
- Scooter trail for Motueka
- Facebook group page,
- Recipes for single living,
- Negotiate a Riverside Pool Discount
- Regular IT info help gatherings,
- dynamic drop in centre
- changing home – accommodation hunting support groups,
- liaise with Richmond Town Hall activities, initiatives complement not compete
- More group support sessions, as per the Green Prescription, dealing with various health or support issues.

What do you think are the main issues facing 65+ years in the Nelson Tasman region?

A number of common themes emerged when

respondents were asked to identify the main issues facing those 65+ years in the region.

The main issue identified was loneliness and social isolation. Tied in with this was losing your driver's licence and lack of affordable transport as well as friends dying.

The second main issue to emerge was around housing. Firstly the lack of affordable housing and the difficulty in downsizing and secondly the inability to manage and/or afford the maintenance in your own home as you age.

Health also got a mention in terms of affordability and access as well as limitations once an individual's health deteriorates. One person mentioned the need for greater information sharing/gathering from Age Concern and the need to make policy, eg Age Friendly Communities, a reality. Support was also shown to our plans to transform the Age Concern Hall into a vibrant community hub for older people.

Do you read our Quarterly Magazine? Any suggestions for improvements?

- More from Older persons perspective
- Letters to Editor, negotiate monthly specials with businesses, easy to garden column, easy to cook column, books to read column
- Larger print
- Update on activities of Age Concern/Connect and initiatives/services being planned. Age-friendly shops.
- Submissions to various authorities and content.

Do you have access to a computer? If yes what is your main online activity?

The majority of respondents, 63%, had access to a computer and used it primarily for emails, although 41% noted they used facebook and nearly 84% used the internet as well as email.

Summary

It was encouraging that the vast majority of respondents were very familiar with Age Concern Nelson Tasman and our services and were supportive of these. Social isolation and loneliness continue to be key issues but housing is now emerging as a second key issue. The survey revealed a good level of digital access among the respondents. The survey responses will be very useful when developing the future strategic direction of Age Concern Nelson Tasman. Thanks very much to all those who filled out a form. The prize draw was won by a Stoke resident.

Dates for Upcoming Staying Safe Driving Courses and CarFit

Are you an older driver who would like to brush up on your road knowledge or do you know someone who does? Upcoming dates and locations for Staying Safe Driving are:

- **Monday 24 June** at The Age Concern Hall, 62 Oxford Street, Richmond from 10am to 12 noon.
- **Monday 2 September** in Stoke.
Time and venue to be confirmed
- **Monday 21 October** in Nelson.
Time and venue to be confirmed
- **Monday 9 December** in Tahunanui.
Time and venue to be confirmed

We also run CarFit workshops, an AA programme that offers senior drivers a free check to ensure they're seated in their cars as safely and comfortably as possible. Dates and locations for CarFit are:

- **Friday 7 June**, venue and time to be confirmed
- **Friday 20 September**, venue and time to be confirmed.

If you would like to attend any of these workshops please register with us by contacting Marrit on (03) 5447624 ext 4 or emailing community@ageconcernnt.org.nz



Life Without A Car We understand how hard it is when you lose your licence, so at Age Concern Nelson Tasman we are now running courses on adjusting to life without a car.

Adjusting to life without a car does not mean losing independence and freedom, and doesn't have to limit your activities or prevent you from enjoying life. Whilst this course is aimed at those who are no longer driving it is open to anyone over 65 who wish to know more about their options.

Our Life Without a Car Course:

- Highlights a range of possibilities to remain mobile
- Offers alternative ways of getting about in the community
- Suggests many options to keep involved and enjoying activities
- Gives valuable insights into adapting our lifestyle
- Encourages living positively without driving.

We have a course coming up on Monday 27 May from 10am until 12 noon in the Age Concern Hall, 62 Oxford Street, Richmond.

If you would like to attend this please register with us by contacting Marrit on 544 7624 ext 4 or community@ageconcernnt.org.nz



AgeConnect Website launched!

Our new website – www.ageconnect.org.nz gives a snapshot of AgeConnect, the social connection initiative set up in 2017 which aims to build friendships and connections for the over 65s across the region. You can find out about AgeConnect Champions, as well as how to volunteer if you want to get involved in van trips, PetConnect and Tea & Tech.

However the most exciting part of the new site is the events calendar which, as AgeConnect Coordinator Breffni O'Rourke says, is about connecting people to events and activities. "There are lots of older people out there with the time and inclination to get out and about more but are not sure about what is available or how to access it," she added.

The events calendar is a dynamic portal, which features regular and one-off events and is updated regularly with new items frequently being added. "Our vision", says Breffni, "is that someone can look at any given day, week or month and have a range of activities to choose from such as educational seminars, social outings, fitness classes, craft groups, shows etc. Anything that takes their fancy."

Early feedback about the Events Calendar has been positive with people reporting they attended events that previously they had not known about. Whilst the Events Calendar is still in its formative stages, it is already looking very full with several activities to choose from each day. Over time it will become even more detailed and eventually older people will be 'spoilt for choice'. In order to find out what is on go to the website www.ageconnect.org.nz and click on 'Event's at the top of the Homepage. From there Events can be searched daily, monthly, by category, eg Staying Active etc or by keyword.



The website has been created by Nelson company Digital Promotions, who kindly subsidised the work as part of their ongoing commitment to local community organisations.

Simplicity Funerals are firm believers that all funerals should reflect the wishes of the family and deceased, no matter what their financial circumstances may be, and Simplicity Funerals will make sure that this philosophy is always upheld.

Whether you need to arrange a funeral for a loved one, or you are trying to take the burden of arranging your own funeral from someone else, we are here to guide you through all of the arrangements, respecting your wishes every step of the way.

We are happy to discuss all aspects of funerals including preplanning and prepayment options, and to make things a little easier, we are happy to come to you at home.

We value the trust and confidence our clients place upon us and you can depend on us to meet your needs with compassion and integrity, *always*.



Anna Loach: Manager & Funeral Director

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Editorial supplied by Simplicity Funerals Nelson

The Joint Programme

– Managing Osteoarthritis

Did you know that osteoarthritis affects 1 in 6 New Zealanders and is the most common form of arthritis? Knowing how to manage osteoarthritis can make a real difference to everyday life and the ability to remain active and independent. This is where 'The Joint Programme' can help. It is a free 2.5 hour session for anyone with osteoarthritis (partners/friends are welcome). It explores everyday opportunities to take control and manage osteoarthritis. Learning is done in a small group setting with others who are experiencing similar issues. These sessions are held regularly but bookings are essential so please either email tjp@nbph.org.nz or phone 03 5437828 to make a booking.

Inspiring Older Person

Sandy Stephens

Sandy Stephens had an amazing career spanning 35 years working in developing countries, implementing programmes to create sustainable food production within local rural communities. She hopes she has made a positive difference to the lives of those she worked with by empowering communities to achieve a sustainable and nourishing food supply.



Sandy was born in Nelson and grew up on 'Woodstock' orchard in Stoke and attended Nelson College for Girls where she developed an innate interest in developing countries. Whilst at College during the widespread famines in India she wrote to then Minister of Interior Mrs Indira Gandhi asking how she could help. She did get a reply 'probably not from Mrs Gandhi' which suggested she 'get an education' first. Sandy describes the response as 'a little patronising' but it did not deter her and her interest remained. While in her final year at Otago University she saw articles about the newly established Volunteer Service Abroad and thought that was something she'd like to do.

After graduating she taught for two years at Waimea College as part of her studentship agreement. To her surprise she discovered she greatly enjoyed teaching so decided to go to Auckland and obtain a Diploma in Secondary Teaching. For one of her teaching sections she asked to go to Fiji, which was then administered by New Zealand. Sandy was the first person to have their placement in Fiji and she greatly enjoyed her 6 weeks there. During this time she met the Head of Nutrition at the Fiji Medical School and she asked her to come back as a tutor in nutrition education under New Zealand's Volunteer Service Abroad.

Fiji proved an important stepping stone to Sandy's career and from there she went to Malaysia for four years where she worked under New Zealand's Colombo Plan in community development, resettling landless people. She managed a staff of 30 people who she trained in community development, nutrition and food production in home gardens. At this point Sandy felt she needed higher level qualifications so she completed her Masters in Rural Sociology at the

University of Reading in Berkshire, UK in 1974. Following that Sandy was offered a job with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations. The FAO was established in 1945 and aimed to secure food security for all to make sure people had regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives. Sandy's first assignment, in 1975, was in Papua New Guinea. She stayed there for four years as Team Leader of a programme to introduce female students and food and nutrition courses into the three agricultural colleges in Rabaul, Popondetta and Mt Hagen. Under Australian rule the focus was on cash crops for export and local food production inevitably declined. Until then, expatriate staff had not seen a need to have women, the major food producers of the nation, educated in agriculture!

From PNG, Sandy worked at the Headquarters of the FAO in Rome in policy, programme and project planning. During the following two years she travelled to many developing countries all over the globe to identify needs and help design projects to meet food needs of the poorest rural communities. One of these was Liberia where she worked with the then Minister of Agriculture to design a programme for the poorest communities in Eastern Liberia. Liberia had an unusual history. Following the abolition of slavery in the United States of America, Liberia was settled by formerly enslaved African-Americans. These people settled on the Coast and the indigenous population was pushed inland. The Americo-Liberians, or Congo or Congau people as they are now called, ruled Liberia as a dominant minority from 1847 until 1980 when there was a violent military coup d'état and the indigenous population took over. Sandy arrived in 1979 and had created a sound reputation for herself and her work when the coup occurred. The President, William Tolbert was immediately executed along with 27 others. Subsequently 13 members of cabinet



were also executed, Sandy's Minister of Agriculture among them. At this point, most foreigners were evacuated but Sandy was not, initially because she did not meet the criteria but also because she was told to stay by the incoming military government because 'you do

good work Missy'. As Chief Technical Adviser she eventually established and grew the programme in over 100 village communities throughout the area. She was the only remaining white woman in Eastern Liberia, although two French priests and a Dutch doctor also remained. The years Sandy spent in Liberia were incredibly turbulent politically and Sandy witnessed and experienced many violent acts, yet she always felt safe and at home. She had the soldiers to protect her. Following the coup food was a real issue in Liberia and during her time there, Sandy was able to introduce development programmes that made an enormous difference in terms of creating sustainable food production for indigenous communities. In 1983, Sandy returned to Rome for a further two years before a transfer to FAO's regional office in Bangkok where she spent 12 years as the Senior Regional Rural Sociologist. From this office she visited all developing countries across Asia and the Pacific developing food production programmes as well as assessing the social consequences of agricultural change on poor rural people's lives. She spent a lot of time in the poorer countries such as Pakistan, Nepal, post-war Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, Tibet and other parts of China and Mongolia, making sure that agricultural change did not disadvantage the poorest, especially rural women.

After all this time working abroad Sandy realised she would like to come back to New Zealand. She took early retirement from FAO at the age of 57 and returned to live in Nelson in 2000 to work as a free-lance consultant. Returning after so many years and all Sandy had seen and achieved was a huge adjustment but she did this gradually by continuing to work overseas on shorter assignments, coming home to write reports and to prepare for the next trip.

She travelled extensively in Asia, Africa and the South Pacific, continuing a substantial amount of the work for her previous employer FAO, as well as for the New Zealand and Australian Foreign Aid Departments and other bilateral and international aid agencies. She was appointed to the Oxfam New Zealand Board of Trustees for a decade and then elected to the Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA) Council. Sandy aimed to fully retire by the time she was 68 but this did not quite happen and it was not until she was 70 that Sandy decided to stop all paid work. Even then she still kept some projects going, but over the last five years Sandy has managed to fully retire. Sandy has fond memories of all the countries she has worked in and none really stands out. She did find some easier than others and also felt being a

woman was both helpful in some situations and limiting in others. Overall she felt respected despite working in male dominated environments. Sandy did experience more than her fair share of harassment and judgement but she seemed to manage this skilfully and her outstanding reputation and skill set was a great leveller. She was fortunate that apart from cases of dengue fever and lassa fever she remained very healthy. For her international work for the rural poor Sandy was made Paul Harris Fellow by Rotary International in 1997 and a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) in the Queen's birthday honours in 2000.

Sandy credits her rural upbringing with tramping and camping holidays for giving her the values and skills to undertake this work. Her rural background meant she could cope with being in the jungle or desert, living without electricity, cooking on a fire or drawing water from a well. She was familiar with farm machinery and basic mechanics. She feels there is something familiar globally about people who farm and her time in Liberia sitting under a tree having conversations with indigenous people reminded her of the way her father talked with their neighbours when she was growing up.

As she gradually retired, Sandy volunteered as a driver for the Red Cross Meals on Wheels programme, became a trustee of the Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust and continued support to both Oxfam NZ and VSA. For the last two years Sandy has been involved with Age Concern as a Volunteer Driver on our Van Trips as part of AgeConnect. She has kindly made her bach available during van trips to Stephens Bay near Kaiteriteri.

Thank you Sandy!



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