

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE



**“Life doesn’t end when dementia begins”**

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# From The Manager

We were thrilled and humbled to have this year's annual appeal our biggest and most successful ever. We collected for two long days in September in both Christchurch City and suburbs, and the wider region including Ashburton, Akaroa, North Canterbury, Kaikoura and the West Coast. The collection involved many hundreds of volunteers who gave up valuable time to help us collect on two very typically cold and wet September days.

Aside from the much needed funds this generates for delivery of our front line services, we are always touched by the many dementia stories people share with us, and how united we feel about working with our community to improve what is available for those living with the every-day reality of dementia.

Thank you one and all for your efforts. Our annual appeal is in Awareness month and generates good publicity and visibility as we wave the dementia flag, and our message, which is about 'Living Well' (note our new vests). In September we also held a seminar on 'Living Well' largely targeted at



those working in the area, but also open to anyone interested. Over one hundred people attended the day and the feedback was superb. We have used it to begin development for next year when we plan to run a workshop series allowing more time/involvement with topics, some targeted at health professionals, others with a family orientation. Planning is now underway, but if you have ideas or requests please do get in touch with us to discuss.



We are also extending our Community Education Seminar series next year and hope to be able to deliver the day time series via video link in our regions (Ashburton, Rangiora and Greymouth). Watch this space for more details – updates about more developments are included in this newsletter.

As we approach the end of another busy year I wish to take time to thank our amazingly committed team of staff, Executive and volunteers and supporters who work so tirelessly. Wishing you a restful break and to our clients' carers and families wishing you a safe and happy festive season.

Darral Campbell  
Manager

# Education Resource for Primary Care

We are very pleased to be working with the South Island Dementia Education Co-ordinators in the development of an interview series of the lived experiences of people with dementia, particularly regarding getting a diagnosis and

what services help. A group of our clients agreed to be filmed and the resulting footage is to be used nationally for primary care, education and training. It may also be used across the specialist secondary sector.

## Let's talk about Sex Conference 2015: Relationships and Intimacy as we age

In September the inaugural 'Let's talk about Sex' Conference was held in Melbourne. A range of speakers shared diverse sexual and intimacy concerns that arise as we age including those that address the rights and needs of people with dementia and their care partners whether the context is within the home or a residential care setting.

Speakers highlighted the need to address the sexual and intimacy realities and to confront what was referred to as the 'ick factor' where the rights to sexual expression for aging populations is unjustly discredited. Attendees were encouraged to challenge perspectives that render the sexuality of older persons invisible and minimise sexual expression in whatever form this takes across the life course.

Joan Price, advocate for "ageless sexuality" outlined three missions for conference attendees - that we should work towards shattering the stereotypes about sexuality and intimacy as we age, educate ourselves about older age sexuality, and advocate for the sexual rights of older persons. We were asked how we include sex and intimacy as part of our conversations with clients.

Dr Rosie King argued that sexual and intimacy needs are always present but that these often need to be renegotiated throughout the life course. Changes in sexual functioning may mean redefining sex and intimacy rather than giving up on this altogether.

One of the benefits of being foregrounding the sexuality of older persons is that it raises consciousness about a broad range of issues. Dr Catherine Barrett of La Trobe University shared some of the findings from Norma's Project where researchers sought to understand the context of sexual assault in older women and in this way, assemble some strategies for prevention.

If the sexual needs of older people are overlooked and silenced in the general population then this is arguably even more the case in residential care where sexual and

intimacy needs may be considered problematic. Moreover, heteronormative assumptions can render LGBTI populations invisible because of a default assumption of heterosexuality.

Katherine Radoslovich, PhD student at the University of Adelaide spoke about privacy and contested space within residential care. Challenges for residents included the freedom to have private space, uninterrupted time, and to be free from the speculative gaze of staff and residents alike.

Within residential care, tensions also exist between the duty of care to protect residents and maintain their dignity and residents rights to freedom of sexual expression and autonomy. Establishing whether a person has the capacity to consent means applying a legal construct that does not fit easily into the area of interpersonal relationships. Accordingly, rather than globally ascribed, capacity is situation specific for any individual.

As we move forward to the future the boundaries around what is considered to be acceptable and appropriate in terms of gender and sexuality are broadening and softening – as baby boomers age residential care settings have an increasing need to have policies, guidelines and training that reflect and accommodate this. The following resources may be helpful concerning this:

The SexAT questionnaire <http://www.agedcare.org.au/publications/agendas-docs-images/sexuality-assessment-tool-sexat-for-residential-aged-care-facilities>

The Hebrew Home at Riverdale <http://www.riverspringhealth.org/files/sexualexpressionpolicy.pdf>

The Last Taboo: A guide to dementia, sexuality, intimacy and sexual behaviour in care homes [www.ilcuk.org.uk](http://www.ilcuk.org.uk)

Normas Project: A Research Study into the Sexual Assault of Older Women in Australia <http://normasproject.weebly.com/uploads/1/8/6/8/18685098/researchreport.pdf>



# Update of Respite/Activity Pilot Program

Spring has seen a number of new beginnings with the arrival of Shelley Wright to the team and the launch of Water Memory groups in Rangiora and Christchurch City.

The first Water Memory group was held in Rangiora on the 12th October and went off with a splash! The second group was held on the 30th October at Wharenuī pool and it is fair to say that participants of both groups enjoyed a mixture of laughter; music and movement. We have been very appreciative of the generosity and collaborative approach demonstrated by staff at Dudley and Wharenuī Swimming Complexes. As a group we have been welcomed with open arms and even enjoyed the expertise of a keen aqua instructor at Wharenuī. As group facilitators it has been a privilege to witness the joy that these groups provide for all participants and we look forward to the continuation of these on a monthly basis.

With Christmas coming it is time to think about filling up the baking tins in preparation for festivities. At Ronald McDonald House many families are unable to focus on such things whilst they are caring for children who are receiving treatment for cancer related illness. We are very pleased to advise that we will begin the McBakers Group on the 16th November. This group will provide opportunity for participants to come together and 'bake by committee' in order to help fill the Ronald McDonald

cake tins. This will be an ongoing collaboration with Ronald McDonald House where participants who have previously enjoyed baking but no longer have the same opportunity to participate in a well-loved activity will now have a chance to give something back to the Ronald McDonald community.

In addition to the establishment and implementation of the above groups we are also busy considering a number of other Community Based Activities to get up and running in 2016. Watch this space and we look forward to keeping you updated with our progress.



# Social Work Profile

Social Worker Sacha O'Brien was interviewed as part of a larger article on women and dementia that featured in the Australian Women's Weekly November 2015:

"THE HEALTH WORKER: Sacha O'Brien, 44, is a social worker, at Alzheimers Canterbury, in Christchurch. When I first began working with people with dementia I was in my early 20s and employed in a rest home dementia unit. I had never been around someone with dementia before. I guess I didn't know what to expect – probably that it would be hard work and quite stressful. But I was surprised. I loved it and really took to it. I loved spending time with the residents. I have always found the people who work in rest homes have big hearts.

It was the beginning of a career that would lead to me gaining a degree in social work and into my current role working as a social worker for Alzheimers Canterbury. When a person is diagnosed with dementia they are referred to us, and we provide support services throughout their journey – potentially right through until they go into residential care.

I visit people in their homes, provide information about dementia, and our team holds education workshops, support groups and runs community-based activities. I have 100 people on my books – some need a lot of support and others need less. People can choose to be involved in our service as much or as little as they want to be.

I think it helps that I was a carer before I took on my current role. It has given me real insight into what the family is going through and some of the stresses that can be involved.

I have also seen up close what it can be like for a person with dementia to get through their day. It can be very solitary and isolating – and for their spouses and family as well. Their whole world can change so much, and they have to manage not only the changes, but often all the grief and loss that comes with that. Family members may have to manage someone's confusion, someone's vulnerability, their anxieties, sometimes behavioural changes, and being there 24/7, so they may not always get enough time out for themselves.

Sometimes the families I encounter ask me how I can do my job, but to me they are the ones doing the hard yards; they didn't choose this, but I did.

From the outside you might think it's very negative and challenging work, but I always feel really positive about what we do. I feel our team is making a positive difference in people's lives, so it's actually fulfilling, heart-warming work. I

meet some wonderful people, some wonderful families, and they keep me going. It's great to see people engage with some of the services we offer, to be able to support them, and also to see the friendships that form from such a hard experience – people with dementia bonding and families seeking support from each other. It's neat to be part of the humour they share, and it's incredible to see all the love and support families give to their loved ones.

There can be challenges though. You get to know your clients pretty well, and you can be with them throughout a very intense time in their lives. It can be hard because it's a progressive illness. When a person is transitioning into care and you know it's too hard for the family to manage any longer, you can get affected by that. But it's good to keep clear in your head what your role is.

The other challenge is the lack of resources. The government wants people to stay in their homes for as long as possible, and that's what is often best for them as well, but there are not always the resources available to support them and their families to make that happen. That is frustrating.

The shortfall can be harrowing for people with dementia and their families – everyone in the family is affected and touched by it. People are being diagnosed earlier in their illness now, so it's important they understand they can still keep living well and enjoy themselves.

There can be negative stories in the press that show the more distressing side of the illness, whereas we often work with people who are still managing to live well. That's a great thing to focus on – what you can keep doing in your life. "





# Staff News

## Volunteering in Nepal

As many of you know I was lucky to come out of Nepal's major earthquakes unscathed this year. So, this month on November 26th I will be taking 3 months leave of absence, heading back to Nepal after being accepted to volunteer at the Kadambari Memorial College, Kathmandu associated with the Nepal School of Social work. I have been invited to and agreed to teach students social work subjects including dementia and issues relevant to surviving an earthquake. There is also a good chance I will

be involved in some fieldwork in community development projects. So, this is a wonderful opportunity to exchange knowledge. I feel very fortunate to have the support of the team at Alzheimers Canterbury to do this.

Claire Coveney - Social Worker

## New staff member

Shelley Wright, Activities Co-ordinator, enjoys the Afternoon Tea Dance



Shelley Wright



Claire Coveney

## Volunteer Profile

Jessie Weber-Sparrow saw Alzheimers Canterbury asking for volunteers in a newsletter and thought why not? She believes dementia is a challenging disease, for both the individual with dementia and the family. For Jessie it was a very simple choice to give up a few hours of time per week to be someone's companion and help an individual and their family out.



One thing Jessie perceives to be very challenging about dementia is the loss of independence that people with dementia experience. By being a friend, and going swimming with her companion, she allows her companion

to continue doing something she loves but is no longer able to do on her own. It aids her independence.

Jessie also enjoys helping out the family and believes that caregiving for someone 24/7 is hard work, and carers need to have the time to look after themselves to avoid burnout. Giving a family member a few hours to do something for themselves helps them stay mentally and physically healthy-and as a result provide better care for their family member with dementia. Jessie says "we all need to help each other out and volunteering is a way to do that. Volunteering also creates connections between community members which strengthens our communities."

Jessie would love to encourage everyone to find something they are passionate about and volunteer a few hours of their time to it per week.

Helen Bradley is a volunteer in Ashburton. Her background is in nursing and throughout her working life she has worked in aged care. Helen has volunteered with Alzheimers Canterbury for the past four years and she gets a lot out of being a Companion Volunteer.



She enjoys seeing the smile on her clients' faces when she arrives and she is passionate about the need for carers to have time out.

Memory Makunike is originally from Zimbabwe but has been living in New Zealand for the past six years. For the last three years Memory has been volunteering with Alzheimers Canterbury, as a Companion Volunteer.



After the earthquakes Memory felt the need to contribute to society. She chose Alzheimers Canterbury because it was obvious that many elderly people were isolated and those with dementia were extremely affected by the earthquake and change in routines.

Memory grew up being taught that giving is better than receiving. She believes that time is something that she can give, and time and love are God-given. Memory enjoys walking with clients and supporting them to maintain their physical and mental health.

Paul Alexander  
Why did I decide to volunteer?  
Around 10 years ago my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's at a relatively (65) young age.



My sister and I got a lot of support from Alzheimer's Canterbury including a night course we did for about 6 weeks or so that taught us coping strategies, what to expect and the like.

Various programmes were made available both to mum and the family by Alzheimer's Canterbury to assist with the challenging journey that is dealing with Alzheimer's.

Mum died in June 2011 and so hers was not the long goodbye of some but a somewhat shorter affair.

I decided in addition to providing some financial assistance that as soon as I could I would give back my own time to try and help as best I could other people and their families dealing with the stress and emotional rollercoaster that is Alzheimer's.

What do I enjoy about volunteering?

I have never done any volunteer work in my life and some friends and relatives were probably surprised/ in complete disbelief that I would undertake such an activity but it was always something I wanted to do; mum would have approved but would have been equally surprised.

Thus far everyone I have driven around (I drive them to various meetings and activities) has been genuinely appreciative and seem to really enjoy the courses themselves which is a credit to Alzheimer's Canterbury.

Also there is some downtime for their husbands and wives who tend to end up as full time carers pretty quickly so enabling them to have a life outside of Alzheimer's is equally important.

For those by themselves who have lost the independence of driving it's a chance to get out and about which they may not otherwise enjoy. A fairly quick trip (51 km per hour !) in my sports car one day was greatly enjoyed by a certain lady in her 80's which made me smile as much as her.

For all of those reasons the couple of hours a week I spend on driving for Alzheimer's Canterbury is the highest hourly rate I earn each week.

# Volunteer Support - A Carer's point of view

Thank you so very much to Alzheimer's Canterbury for having a volunteer program that assists both those diagnosed with dementia and their Carers. I will attempt to put into words what it means to both my darling wife and life's partner Anne and I. In particular I want to point out the role played by our volunteer in making a difficult and stressful situation a wee bit easier to deal with.

Our volunteer was introduced to us through Alzheimer's Canterbury to support my dear wife by taking her swimming once a week. Anne my dearest is an avid swimmer and enjoys doing laps at the local swimming complex, but over time this has become more than just a swim at the pool. Our volunteer and Anne have developed a bond and friendship and often after swimming chat over coffee and a slice.

Our volunteer has been a gift, a young woman who is warm, engaging, sincere and takes her task as a volunteer very seriously. Volunteers like ours are of the highest value to those they provide a service for. I am touched by her kindness, foresight and understanding of people with dementia. There is never a time that she does not have a kind word to say or a smile to share. Thank you Alzheimer's Canterbury, thank you our wonderful

volunteer, we are ever grateful for the service you provide.

The role of a volunteer is very important in not only the life of those with memory loss but also to Carers like myself who need time out to refresh, refocus and have quiet time to recharge for the daily challenges of dealing with the many aspects of dementia. Not forgetting the other services provided by Alzheimer's Canterbury in supporting both those with memory loss and their Carers.

Anne joins the Gardening Group on the first Monday of every month at The Christchurch Botanical Gardens which again provides respite for both those affected by dementia and their Carers. This gives me time to go for a run around Hagley Park without care or worry that Anne is happy and taken care of. A cup of coffee shared by other gardeners is much looked forward to by Anne. Don't forget all the other support groups provided- the reading and art appreciation groups also play a great role in helping both those with dementia and their Carers get some respite from daily rigours.

Alzheimer's volunteers 'take a bow', you are all doing a great service to your community.

By Nick

## McBakers Group



The inaugural McBakers group giving back to Ronald McDonald House



# Afternoon tea dance

Once again a very successful, happy Afternoon Tea Dance was held on 14th October 2015.



# Fundraising

## Riccarton Market Raffle

We will have our Annual Riccarton Market stall and raffle again this year on Sunday December 13th. To get the best result for our raffle we are in need of good-quality, unused items as raffle prizes. Perhaps you have some unwanted gifts in the garage, or you may just want to support us by donating raffle prizes. Please call Annelies 3792590 if you can help.

We would love to see you on Sunday 13th December at the Riccarton Market!

## Gift wrappers needed for December

If you like gift wrapping and you are available during the day, we would love to hear from you. We are offered the exciting opportunity to wrap Christmas gifts for a donation towards our work in the community at Eastgate and Merivale Malls. Please call 3792590 or email Monique for more information or register for this opportunity ([monique@alzcanty.co.nz](mailto:monique@alzcanty.co.nz)). Shifts are between 10am and 4pm.

Supporting Alzheimers Canterbury: have you thought of leaving a gift in your Will?

It's a common misconception that only wealthy people leave money to charity when they die. Bequests in wills are not just made by the rich and famous! The reality is that most bequests are made by ordinary, hardworking people who want to make a positive difference to their community and other people's lives after they've gone.

The simple fact is that without the generosity of these everyday New Zealanders just like you, we would not be able to exist and do our valuable work in the community. Bequests form the financial basis of many New Zealand charities and are absolutely essential for ensuring the good work we do continues into the future. The good news is that including a charity in your will is just as easy as providing for your loved ones. And it can be as much or as little as you want.

Whoever you are, whatever your situation, you can help make a difference and help create a better world by including a gift in your Will. No gift is too big or too small, we will sincerely appreciate your gesture of support. Call or email Darra for a chat about including Alzheimers Canterbury in your Will.

# Donations slip



## YES, I'd like to support people living with dementia

As a not-for-profit agency, Alzheimers Canterbury needs the support of the community to continue to deliver services that really make a difference to the quality of life for all affected by dementia.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

PHONE .....EMAIL .....

☐ I would like to receive regular email updates from Alzheimers Canterbury

Please accept my donation of : ☐ \$10 ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ Other \$..... or:

Internet Banking Details: ASB 123240:0097861:00 Alzheimers Canterbury

(Please use your Surname as a 'Reference' ) or: ☐ Cheque is enclosed

Credit Card Details: Please charge my credit card with \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐

Card number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_ Cardholder's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Invest in your future – remember Alzheimers Canterbury in your Will.**

Contact us for more information. Email [annelies@alzcanty.co.nz](mailto:annelies@alzcanty.co.nz) or call 3792590.



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