

# StrongVoices

EMPOWERED LIVES

Autumn 2024

Ray bikes the  
dream

Alfie dives in  
feet first

Lives behind  
the lens

ihc <sup>75</sup> years  
IN YOUR COMMUNITY





# Kōrero

## This is a big year for IHC as we turn 75.

That's 75 years of staying true to our vision of great lives for people with intellectual disabilities. That's something worth celebrating.

We're an organisation that said people with intellectual disabilities should live in communities and families – not locked away. We said everyone deserves fair access to healthcare, education and proper support, the chance to earn money and pay tax, to follow interests and opportunities, to have a relationship, to good do things and to make mistakes. We still believe that.

IHC today does lots of the same things we have always done. We advocate to change laws and correct injustice on a national stage and provide information, connection and support in small communities.

But we've changed and grown. We are still a fiercely independent and much-loved charity, but we're also a large-scale housing and disability service provider. Why? Because that's what is needed.

When the institutions closed, we didn't just celebrate, we bought homes in communities. Today people still live in shared homes where they are supported and encouraged get out and about to do the things they like doing and to be as independent as possible. We're champions of the Enabling Good Lives principles, but for us it's less about an hour here and there and more about providing quality 24/7 support. We have amazing staff who support people to have as much choice and opportunity as possible each day.

More than a decade ago, in 2010, we established Accessible Properties and that sparked some good debate about the impact of our property activities on our core focus, which is intellectual disability. We have since seen the advantages of a strong performance by Accessible Properties to the IHC Group as a whole. Accessible Properties manages IHC's property portfolio, rents houses to tenants with intellectual disabilities, who otherwise find it hard to get affordable housing, and pays a dividend to IHC each year. When Accessible Properties began providing social housing we knew there were synergies as we continued to support people in need, but we had no idea how many people living in social housing have a disability. Our annual tenant survey shows that's the case in more than half of the homes we provide.

We are still proud to ask for donations and remain driven by our unwavering mission. We are New Zealand's charity for people with intellectual disabilities and will be here in good times and in bad.

What do we want to do with the next 75 years?

Gina Rogers  
Editor, Strong Voices

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### Join the conversation:

We want to keep you posted. Be the first to read the news and views across the IHC Group and disability sector. We'd love to hear from you.

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 [ihc.org.nz/strong-voices](https://ihc.org.nz/strong-voices)

### Cover image:

Ten-year-old Ella Sutton and Huntaway Peter on her Poppa Bruce Robertson's farm at Whakapirau on Kaipara Harbour. See the story on page 12.



# Lockdown never ends for Jo and Harvey

SECTOR

**Jo Ellis put her life on hold 17 years ago to care for her disabled son Harvey. She wants to tell the new Government what that has meant for her – how she has sacrificed her career and lived an isolated life, struggling to find the support she was entitled to but didn't know about.**

**For 24 hours at least after Harvey was born we were in new-parent bliss. But the discovery of a heart condition and the suspicion that there was something else going on changed everything.**

Then came the diagnosis of Cri du Chat syndrome. All the typical experiences and thoughts that new parents should have were completely wiped away by worry and grief. And

questions. How severely would Harvey be affected? Would he ever walk or talk?

This beautiful little boy was vulnerable. He would be my forever baby, my adult child. I felt like my life was over. I would never be able to work again and there would certainly never be any retirement. Was my marriage strong enough to weather this? The short answer was no, as I found out when

Harvey was only one year old.

Living overseas, the first year of Harvey's life was spent engulfed in grief, specialist and therapist visits, great attention to feeding so Harvey wasn't a 'failure to thrive', and watching everything Harvey did and wondering if it was new-baby stuff or part of his syndrome. Even though Harvey was sick with reflux, he was relatively healthy. He was beautiful, but most of all he was loved.

After a year, I moved back to New Zealand to start life as a single parent. There were no week-about for me, no weekends off, no support with big medical decisions. There was absolutely no chance of ever getting back into the workforce. I calculated that by the time Harvey was ready to leave home – if the system even supported that – I would be retirement age. I had started university study to work towards a business degree and I'm glad I did, because although I wasn't in paid work, it gave me the skills I needed to become Harvey's CEO. I am now responsible for recruitment, training and ongoing administration for carers who assist with Harvey's care.

For this responsibility I can claim a total of \$300 per year. If I were to be paid for this role, I believe I would certainly be remunerated with a few extra zeros. Think of the skills I have had to acquire, the advocacy required to get even the basic of needs met. The applications for the funding required, just so things are safe and accessible.

I was judged for not entering the workforce once Harvey started school. I am on call 24/7 – up at night when I hear Harvey struggling with his breathing. If I were a shift worker doing nights, would I be expected to take on a job during the day as well? Who would be on call for the many extra school, medical and therapists' appointments?

Harvey's needs are so great that he is unable to do anything for himself. I believe that Harvey has a right to access the things he needs, such as education. He has the right to have support to do normal daily tasks in a

**Above: Jo and Harvey Ellis have had to work long and hard to thrive as a family.**

**Continues on page 15**





# Stand Tall game picks up speed

IHC

**IHC has big plans for its Stand Tall money game app this year, and many more students and teachers will have a chance to play the game.**

Stand Tall has been developed to help young people with intellectual disabilities and neurodiversity learn to manage money – and life. The game app has already been put through its paces in five Wellington secondary schools to gain feedback from students and teachers.

Phil Clarke, IHC Head of Library and Information Resourcing, is now planning to take the game further afield by involving more schools and libraries throughout the country.

“People who are interested should let their local schools know or email us on [ihc.events@ihc.org.nz](mailto:ihc.events@ihc.org.nz).” Phil says one of the IHC team could come and run a workshop to showcase the game, either in person or online.

“We have tablets that already have the game loaded. We introduce the game then people can go at their own pace.”

A new member of the IHC Programme’s team, who has experience working with disabled

students, will be responsible for promoting the game in schools. “We are looking at students in special classes.”

Phil also plans to promote the game app through public libraries. It has already been showcased at Mt Roskill Library in Auckland and Wellington City Libraries had some displays last year. “It’s an opportunity to tie it in with any promotion they are doing,” he says. “They could tie it into World Down Syndrome Day and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. We have promotional material that we can send them.”

The app, developed with online gaming company InGame, challenges players to think about their day-to-day spending choices. Players play at their own pace and can repeat stages if necessary. A voiceover option is also available. The game is designed to be played by individuals, but it also works well as a group activity.

But technology doesn’t stand still. Stand Tall is Version 1 of the app. Phil plans to establish a user group to discuss a possible Version 2 to see where the game could go next. It will also be entered in the 2024 Hi-Tech

Awards in the Best Hi-Tech Solution for the Public Good category.

In 2023 Stand Tall was showcased at the New Zealand Disability Support Network Conference in Wellington, the Next Steps Expo 2023 in Christchurch, the uLearn23 conference in Auckland and the LIANZA (Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa) conference in Christchurch.

The Holdsworth Charitable Trust donated \$20,000 in seed funding for Stand Tall, and \$75,000 was contributed by the Ministry of Social Development. Other supporters are the Dines Family Charitable Trust, Avanti Finance, Glenn and Sonja Hawkins and SkyCity Auckland Community Trust.

There is a web version of Stand Tall at [ihc-standtall.com](http://ihc-standtall.com), and it can also be downloaded free on Google Play and Apple iTunes.

**Above: Voice actor Shardia Rose Keen (centre) with friends at the launch of the Stand Tall game app in Auckland last year.**





# Ray bikes the dream

IHC

**On 1 March Ray Urlich will set off from Newcastle, Australia, with two mates to ride across to Perth.**

It's the first leg of his motorbike ride around the world to raise money for IHC. It will take him nearly two years of riding through 35 to 38 countries in South-East Asia, the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, Eastern and Western Europe and the United Kingdom.

After two weeks Ray's mates will leave him north-east of Adelaide and he will continue the journey alone for another five days across the Nullarbor Plain to Perth.

It's been a dream for a long time for the 54-year-old, who bought his first motorbike – a Honda 250 – 30 years ago. For this epic ride, his choice is a Suzuki DR 650, which he has affectionately named Draga. That's 'Darling' in Croatian. "I am hoping the bike will be a darling and get me there," he says. "I am half-Croatian. Through Europe I will be travelling on my Croatian passport."

It's a high-stakes journey for Ray. He has quit his 11-year job as Business Development Manager for Burger

Fuel and rented out his Auckland house. "I am clearing out my life savings. It will be worth it.

"I live pretty frugally and I have saved up a fair amount and sponsorship has made up the balance." Ray estimates the trip will cost \$155,000. Sponsors have contributed \$55,000 and Ray has put in \$100,000. For each mile he rides, he plans to raise NZ\$10 'a mile' for IHC.

Three important people have influenced his decision to ride across the world. First of them is his uncle Peter Hill. "My uncle, when he was two years old, got cerebral meningitis. He was partially paralysed, non-verbal and hearing impaired. My grandparents, along with IHC, took care of him his whole life." After Peter's parents died, he went to live in an IHC residence in Rotorua.

Then, in the '90s, Peter read *Investment Biker: On the Road with Jim Rogers*, a book by the American investor about his global motorcycle journey. He was also inspired by Itchy Boots, a video blog by Dutch traveller Noraly Schoenmaker who rode solo over 130,000 kilometres through 49 countries.

Ray too will record his journey on a video camera. Supporters can track

him on <https://2wheels2everywhere.com>. Filming his journey has meant a change to his plans to stay in campsites because he needs a quiet room and a power supply to download and edit video footage for his blog.

He's as ready as he can be for whatever he encounters on his journey. He is worried mainly about having the correct paperwork for crossing land borders, which are more reliant on pieces of paper than the electronic systems of airports. He doesn't plan to ride at night or use big motorways. He's also worried about riding in the Northern Hemisphere winter. "You don't want to get caught in the snow in Iran and Iraq."

And when it's all over? Ray says there may be a book, or perhaps a documentary using his video footage.

Follow Ray around the world on <https://2wheels2everywhere.com> and donate to IHC through his Givealittle page.

**Above: Ray Urlich's Suzuki DR 650 'Draga' will be crated up and taken across the Tasman for the start of the ride.**





# Alfie dives in feet first

## CHOICES

**At just 22 years old, Alfie Linn is already a double medallist on the world stage, winning silver and bronze in the Men's Doubles in table tennis at the 2023 Virtus Global Games in Vichy, France.**

Swimming, basketball, cricket and lawn bowls are also passions for the recently nominated Nelson Sportsman of the Year, but this year Alfie means business.

After leaving Waimea College in 2022, with the support of Choices NZ, Alfie has made a big splash in the Nelson job market, taking every opportunity to learn new skills and make a good living.

Alfie began his career volunteering for Connings Food Market in Nelson, and for the past year has been working as Produce Assistant, a paid role, for two hours per week – a job that he loves.

Most recently, Alfie has completed the Dive into Success programme, which over eight weeks provides people with intellectual disability, autism or neurodiversity the opportunity to gain knowledge, develop confidence and learn transferable skills for the workplace. It's a relatively new joint initiative between Choices NZ and Community Leisure Management (CLM), which manages Richmond Aquatic Centre in Nelson and Lido Aquatic Centre in Palmerston North.

The ultimate goal of the programme is for the trainees to gain casual, part-time or full-time employment in an area of their choice.

Alfie says it was a great learning curve.

"I found it hard at first because I didn't know what I needed to do, but the staff wrote out my jobs on a list and that helped me learn what I needed to do, like cleaning, sweeping,

washing windowsills, rubbish and recycling," says Alfie.

His favourite part? "Doing jobs and being part of the team and seeing the jobs people were doing like swim school, for instance, and lifeguarding."

Toni Griffiths, National Manager Choices NZ, says Dive into Success is designed to encourage the development of skills that can be transferred to other work opportunities and other areas of the trainee's life.

"It's all about building confidence in the workplace," says Toni. "At the end of the eight weeks, trainees have gained an understanding of the day-to-day expectations.

"Our goal is that people will come out of this programme ready to tackle the job market."

Alfie isn't new to work – with the support of Choices NZ over the past two years he has also volunteered at

Nook café, The Stables Restaurant & Tavern, Sprig + Fern Brewery and The Buzz Nelson, a work skills programme for disabled people making the transition from school.

Through Dive into Success, Alfie was supported to practise a formal interview, develop an understanding of employment agreements and learn more about working in a team environment.

"I learned about writing about myself and the things I've done and my work experience," says Alfie. "Also, my other achievements and awards in sports and table tennis representing New Zealand, Māori songs and haka."

If there are two things you need to know about Alfie, it's that he loves meeting new people and being part of a team. Alfie's initial goal was to be in a meet-and-great role as he has a great rapport with people and thrives in a people environment.

"I learned to be polite and never to be rude to anyone," says Alfie. "I needed to smile and be friendly – 'Hello, how are you? How are you doing?' – I learned to answer questions about myself and ask questions about the job, like, 'Who will I work with? Will I have a break? What will my hours be?'"

Now that he's completed the programme, Alfie's goal is to extend his hours at Connings, where he says he works with a great team, or get another part-time job in the community.

He's also off to Turkey in March to compete in the 2024 Virtus Global Games.

Once back on home soil, Alfie says he'd like to help with the children at the Aquatic Centre, teaching them how to swim. "I would also like lots of different work experiences like the

hospital, airport, hospitality, cafés, the dentist with my brother, shop work and supermarkets like PAK'nSAVE and New World or in a retirement home.

"I love meeting people and love greeting people. I'm great with helping people."

**Previous page: 'Swimming' in swim goggles from the Richmond Aquatic Centre lost property collection are Swim Magic Head Instructor Jo Loveridge and Dive into Success participant Alfie Linn.**

**Below: (From left) Jo Loveridge and Swim Magic Administration Support Lisa Stanley, Choices NZ Facilitator Sophie Ward and Alfie.**



## Innovator

Since its inception in 2001, the Dive into Success programme has supported nine people in Nelson and Palmerston North.

It was awarded merit for the Aquatic Innovation Award at the 2023 National Aquatic Awards, presented by Recreation Aotearoa,

which highlight the important work and innovations carried out by organisations and individuals within the industry.

The judges said they appreciated Choices NZ's and CLM's inclusive approach that not only addressed staff shortages in the industry,

but also provided meaningful employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

This year, Choices NZ and CLM are looking to expand the programme to other pools across the country.





# Āhei gives great kids a great chance

## SECTOR

**Young Whangārei school-leaver Aston Donker was clear about one thing when he turned up to the new Āhei work experience programme earlier this year. He didn't want a job involving customers.**

"We find that most of our interns come in without a clear idea of what they want to do," says Āhei Programme Coordinator Kris Finlayson. Aston knew what he didn't want. "He knew that he didn't want to do customer services – this changed quickly. We put him in a place where we knew he would be well supported.

"I know he won't mind me saying this," Kris says. "He is autistic and so there's an anxiety around social interaction."

This is something Kris understands well. Kris is autistic too and left school after failing all but one of his exams. He is now completing his PhD.

Kris says school doesn't suit every student, not because of their ability but because they can't succeed in the system. "I see myself in some of them. I know that it's not the individual's fault," he says.

"The majority of our students have been absent from school, for years in some cases." He says one student was enrolled at school but hadn't attended for four years because of anxiety. "It was the school that sent his application through."

Kris says interns tend to be mostly 16 or 17 years of age. "The majority of them are on the spectrum – ADHD [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder], FASD [foetal alcohol spectrum disorder], Down syndrome, dyslexia or a learning disability."

Āhei provides work experience for tangata whaikaha (people

with disabilities) aged 16–24 years, through a combination of structured workshops and learning and support on the job. Āhei is delivered by Whangārei disability service provider Northable and has been funded for two years by the Ministry of Social Development through He Poutama Rangatahi, a Work and Income work-readiness and skills initiative.

The young people start their six-month internship with a three-week block course to get work ready. After that is a work placement with a host employer, with Āhei mentoring the interns throughout the placement. At the end of the six-month placements, Āhei helps the interns to find paid work. There are seven or eight interns in each intake.

"The programme is very, very individualised. What the intern needs to succeed, we provide," Kris says.



Aston was in the first intake of the Āhei Internship Programme, in April 2023, and is regarded by Kris as one of their first successes.

“My Mum saw the Āhei Internship Programme thing on Facebook. She signed me up to the programme,” Aston says. “When I got there we were treated to a nice kai then we got stuck into work.”

“They ended up placing me in the Northable Equipment Plus store. I would take phone calls, help people find products, stocktake, restocking the shop floor, basic cleaning – like vacuuming and dusting – handling money. At the end I was opening and closing the till.”

Aston took it in his stride. “I was neutral – let’s see how it is. I wasn’t excited, but I wasn’t worried either. I think it’s just one of my characteristics.”

At the end of his internship, Aston was employed by PAK’nSAVE, where he collects trolleys and picks up rubbish for two days a week. He has been offered more hours but has declined them. Instead, he is looking for other options on job sites Seek and Trade Me and knows he can contact Āhei for help with a CV and interview role play.

“Mainstream school didn’t suit me well at all,” Aston says. “I have a whole team supporting me in this that I can reach out to, whereas a teacher in class they get busy and have to talk to another student. If I raise something I am not happy with, I feel like Āhei would really listen to me.”

Kris says Āhei supports graduates in their job search for a year, or longer if necessary. He says Aston is interested in working with numbers and his future may involve some further study.

One of the employers working with Āhei is CityCare Property in Whangārei, a company maintaining parks, gardens and facilities for Whangārei District Council. CityCare took on its first intern this year. Horticulture Team Supervisor Cory Fernmoor says Angus Dunn started at a busy time as spring growth was kicking in – although, Cory says, things never really stop growing in Northland. “It’s like living in a giant greenhouse up here.”

Angus had helped family members with their gardens but working with a



crew planting 20,000 bedding plants in time for summer was a huge challenge.

Angus started by working with various crews for a week each before finally settling on working on Wednesdays with the horticulture team and Thursdays on facility maintenance or weed control. His internship ran through until the end of January.

“He absolutely loved it, and he was always positive,” Cory says. “It was a great opportunity for Angus, but it was a good opportunity for my staff, because many of them had not worked in a diverse workplace.”

Āhei Programme Coordinator Kris is keen to find more opportunities for more young people. Kris went through school before NCEA. “For School Certificate I only just passed science and failed everything else and just left. The only goal I had was to go to university and to travel.”

While he waited until he turned 20 – the age you can go to university without entrance qualifications – he made the most of his time. “I travelled to Europe. I travelled to China and taught English. I got a commercial pilot’s licence.”

Kris then started studying development studies and law at Victoria University of Wellington



before switching to anthropology and French. He is now finalising his PhD thesis in the field of identity studies.

The fourth cohort of Āhei interns starts in February and Kris is thrilled at the difference it is making.

“These are great kids who just need opportunities.”

**Previous page: Aston Donker and Northable Equipment Plus manager Zelde Morrison-Smith.**

**Top: Angus Dunn started as an intern at CityCare Properties at a busy time as spring growth was kicking in and parks needed a tidy up ready for visitors.**

**Above: Āhei Programme Coordinator Kris Finlayson.**



# Ka rawe! That's awesome!



IHC

**Do you know the difference between a mihimihi and a pepeha? Do you know the words and actions to the IDEA Services waiata? How about what to do on a marae?**

These, among many other things, are being featured on IHC Media's latest live sessions Tu Meke Reo Time on Tuesdays. They are an introduction to Te Ao Māori – the Māori world for everyone. The sessions will cover te reo – the Māori language, tikanga – Māori customs and traditional values and, of course, kapa haka.

The first session, held on Waitangi Day, was presented by Service Manager Mary Bradfield and Support Worker Georgie Meadows – both members of Te Anga Paua o Aotearoa – IDEA Services' National Māori

Advisory Group. Mary and Georgie are now alternating as presenters of the weekly sessions.

The new sessions are taking the Tuesday morning 'Music with Ahjay' timeslot. Ahjay is taking a break for a bit and will return to IHC Media at a new time yet to be confirmed.

Mary (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine) says the sessions will start and end with traditional prayers – karakia timatanga and karakia whakamutunga. She says anybody can take part. "Absolutely. It will be done in English and Māori because I am bilingual."

She says she would love to see everyone develop the confidence to speak te reo and to speak out proudly. She hopes there will be a buy-in from whānau as well and provide a means of connection. "I hope that the guys will be able to reach out to their families."

Georgie (Rangitāne and Ngāti Kuia) says she wants the IHC Live! sessions to empower the people we support – "to whakamana themselves; to whakamana their staff". She says she hopes the sessions will increase the visibility of these kiritaki, to increase their inclusion and their leadership skills.

"It will also be really interactive because everybody needs the opportunity to practise what they are learning.

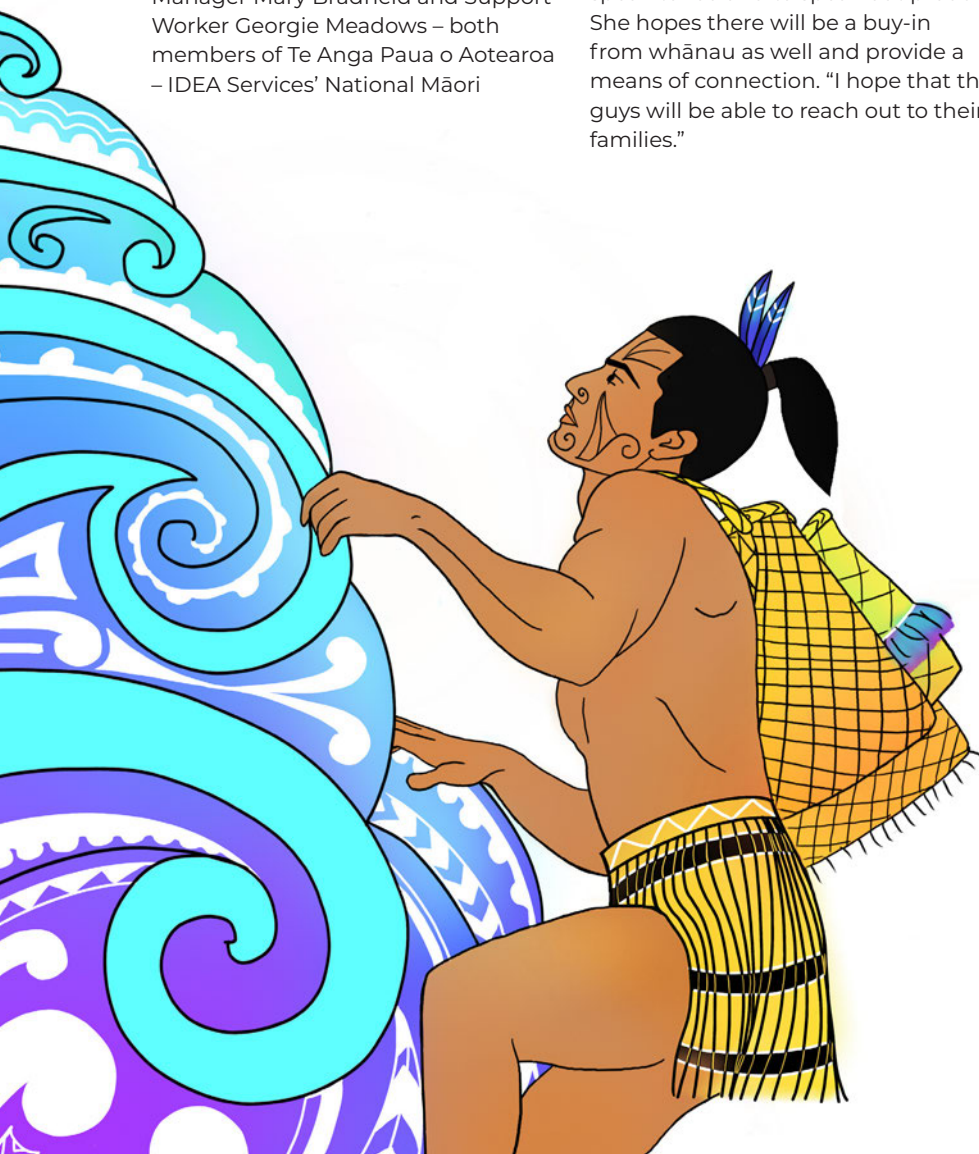
"While Mary and I are the presenters of this class, we want the kiritaki to take over and for us to step back," she says.

"One of the brilliant things about the platform is that you have the Live! sessions, but also all the pre-recorded resources. One of the things that will be great is to actually interview people about their experiences."

The sessions have been inspired by the idea of Tāne's baskets of knowledge. *Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand* tells the story. "The god Tāne climbed to the citadel Te Tihi-o-Manono, in the highest of the 12 heavens, known as Te Toi-o-ngā-rangi. There he retrieved three baskets of knowledge: te kete-tuatea (basket of light), te kete-tuauri (basket of darkness) and te kete-arouai (basket of pursuit). There are several interpretations of what each basket represents. The scholar Māori Marsden has suggested that the basket of light is present knowledge, the basket of darkness things unknown, and the basket of pursuit is the knowledge humans currently seek."

Find the Tu Meke Reo Time sessions at [ihcmedia.org.nz/live](http://ihcmedia.org.nz/live)

**Above and left: Tāne retrieves the baskets of knowledge from the heavens. Illustration by Lindsey Myers, IHC Interactive Designer and host of IHC Live! Draw with Lindsey on Thursdays.**







# Autism Clinic trials new Aotearoa-style support

## IHC FOUNDATION

**Autistic children and their whānau attending Victoria University's Autism Clinic may feel more at home with a new style of support on offer this year.**

Autism Clinic Lead Dr Hannah Waddington and the clinic's Māori and autistic advisory groups have co-designed Raupī te Raupō, a New Zealand-appropriate programme aimed at supporting children and their families to flourish. The programme is being piloted this year with a \$41,000 grant from the IHC Foundation. It is thought to be the first programme in the world to be developed alongside autistic adults and indigenous peoples.

The Autism Clinic—Te Rāngai Takiwātanga was established in 2017 in partnership with the IHC Foundation and Autism New Zealand to evaluate best-practice early supports for young autistic children in New Zealand.

The clinic focuses on upskilling the adults around the child to enable better support and to improve their quality of life. The clinic also works with therapists and other health and education professionals.

One of the first programmes delivered through the clinic was the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM), developed in the United States.

Around 200 children have gone through the ESDM programme at the clinic and Hannah says families have been positive about the results. "The training has made our therapists better therapists."

She says, however, that whānau, particularly whānau Māori, have reported that ESDM is not culturally responsive or well suited to an Aotearoa New Zealand context. At the same time autistic members of the clinic's advisory group have stressed the need for a neurodiversity-affirming programme of support, developed alongside autistic people. "At the moment there is no such programme worldwide, as all established programmes have been developed without significant input from autistic adults."

Raupī te Raupō has been created by Hannah, colleagues Dr Jessica Tupou and Carla Wallace-Watkin from Victoria University; Lee Patrick, an autistic Research and Advocacy Advisor from Autism NZ, and with input from the two advisory groups. The Māori advisory rōpū includes a psychologist, kōhanga reo teachers and several whānau members. The autistic advisory group includes advocates/researchers, a parent and a part-time user of augmentative and alternative communication.

Hannah says the programme is flexible. "We want to support the child to be happy in their own unique

skills." Families have the ability to choose the areas they want to focus on. "Families really liked the ability to choose their topics."

Four therapists, including one Māori therapist, will be trained to deliver Raupī te Raupō. The funding provided by the IHC Foundation will pay for weekly sessions over nine-weeks for 22 autistic children this year. The sessions include practical sessions at home and discussion sessions over Zoom. Hannah says a donation from a private funder has since boosted the number of children to receive support to 35. The children will be drawn from the clinic's waiting list. At present families can self-refer to the clinic but they may wait up to six months for their children to be seen.

The Autism Clinic team will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of Raupī te Raupō through research and will adapt the programme according to feedback from participating families.

"Our criteria for this programme are that the child is under five and autistic or showing signs of autism." To find out more about Raupī te Raupō, email [autism-clinic@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:autism-clinic@vuw.ac.nz) or phone 0220106855.

**Above: A child enjoys some learning and play at the Autism Clinic in Petone. The clinic is now offering Raupī te Raupō, a New Zealand-appropriate programme for children and whānau.**





# Lives behind the lens

## IHC

**A gentle image of her husband and young son has proved to be a winner for South Otago dairy farmer Renae Martin in the 2023 IHC Calf & Rural Scheme photo competition.**

Renae captured her husband James Flett and son William as they headed out on their Balclutha farm to get the cows in for milking. “There is just the three of us in the family,” she says.

“This year we were able to finally grow a calf to send to the sale to support the scheme.” Renae says 2023 was their first year doing 50:50 sharemilking and that made it possible to donate a calf. “It’s something we will do each year,” she says.

She does not have a direct connection with intellectual disability. “But I grew up with a mother with multiple sclerosis so when I went to things with her I got to spend time and grow up with people with intellectual and physical disabilities.

“I learnt a lot, spending time and working with those people and now that I am able to support them with a

small contribution, it’s a great feeling. I hope it’s able to help in some way to give them the best experiences in life.”

Renae won the IHC Calf category and a \$150 Prezzy Card with her entry: ‘Inspecting the last of the daffodils’. She also won the Working on the Farm category with: ‘Teamwork walking to get the cows in for milking’ and another \$100 card.

A \$100 Prezzy Card went to Jess Kelly for winning the Farm Animals category: ‘Besties for life’ – an image of a boy with his trophy-winning calf.

The IHC Calf & Rural Scheme photo competition celebrates our rural supporters. This year the competition attracted 148 entries, competing in the three new categories.

While Kim Sutton didn’t win a prize, her photograph of her mud-covered daughter, dog and farm bike told a story and made a powerful *Strong Voices* cover image.

It’s more than a two-hour drive from Kim’s home in the Bombay Hills to her parents’ farm at Whakapirau on the Kaipara Harbour, but it’s a regular

trip for her and her two children Ella and Harry.

Kim is a teacher at Karaka School, where the kids also go. But their hearts are firmly attached to the sheep and beef farm where Kim grew up.

Ella and her older brother Harry like to help ‘Poppa’ Bruce Robertson round up the animals, including docking 2000 lambs each year. “They have been docking since they could walk, and before that they sat in the tractor,” Kim says.

Kim takes many photographs of the kids on the farm. This year she entered a photo of 10-year-old Ella and Bruce’s 10-year-old Huntaway Peter on the back of a farm bike.

Bruce is a donor to the IHC Calf & Rural Scheme, and the farm has been in the family for a while. It was first farmed by Bruce’s father, Harry.

Kim says Ella always asks how the dogs are when she calls him, and Poppa Bruce has been talking to her about going shepherding when she is older. “She’s thinking of it, as long as it involves a horse,” Kim says. Peter,





meanwhile, is at the other end of his farming career. “He’s an old dog; he’s nearly retired.”

Launched in 1982, the IHC Calf & Rural Scheme has grown to be one of New Zealand’s most successful charitable programmes. Over that time it has raised more than \$41 million for disabled people thanks to the support of people in rural communities. There were 22 IHC calf sales nationwide in 2023-24 and a total of 3245 animals pledged to the scheme. These included 1521 calves, 1053 virtual calves, 140 lambs and sheep, 72 virtual lambs and 459 other animals.

Farmers whose calves make the top 10 percent of the PGG Wrightson recommended sales go into their regions’ draws for \$100 vouchers for use at PGG Wrightson’s Rural Supplies stores. Farmers also go into draws for two Mystery Weekends.

To pledge a calf or make a virtual calf donation to the IHC Calf & Rural Scheme and support people



with intellectual disabilities in rural communities go to [ihc.org.nz/calf](http://ihc.org.nz/calf)

**Previous page: James Flett and son William head out on their Balclutha farm to get the cows in for milking.**

**Top: Renae Martin also won the IHC Calf category with her entry: ‘Inspecting the last of the daffodils’.**

**Above: Everyone’s a winner. Jess Kelly’s prize-winning image of a boy and his trophy-winning calf.**



# Sailability Wellington plans to build six big boats

## SECTOR

**Sailability Wellington, a charity giving disabled people the opportunity to sail, has launched an ambitious project to build six new boats.**

The design – called ParAble-Whakatauki – will be for a new, larger class of yacht that can carry more weight and be accessible to more sailors.

The ParAble-Whakatauki was designed by the late Wellington boat builder Bruce Askew in 2013. Since then, Sailability Wellington has had a dream to build six of the boats – enough to establish a New Zealand class and hold a national regatta.

Sailability Wellington Chief Executive Don Manning says they started by building prototypes out of wood to test the design and trial rigging formats, steering systems and sail designs and are now ready to work with commercial boat builders on the fibreglass construction.

The \$280,000 project has been partially funded by the TG Macarthy Trust, and Sailability Wellington Trust is now looking for further sponsorship.

“The ParAble-Whakatauki class yacht will be used for learn-to-sail, cruising and racing. It will carry up to 240kg of payload, compared with a maximum of 160kg in our existing yachts. This would enable us to expand and increase the accessibility of our already very successful programme,” Don says.

“We currently provide sailing experiences for well over 200 sailors with a range of disabilities, as well as support for their whānau. We always have a waiting list,” Don says. “They come from Horowhenua to Upper Hutt and down to Cook Strait, and some even from Wairarapa, where we hope to set up a base quite soon.”

At present, Sailability Wellington has 28 boats specially designed for stability and three support boats. It operates from three bases – Evans Bay, Seaview and Titahi Bay – over six days weather permitting, all year around.

Don says the operation relies on more than 70 volunteers, who are trained as coaches, companion sailors, dock hands, pursers, bosuns, support boat crew, race managers and administrators.

The boat-building project is the start of a new direction for Sailability Wellington.

“Our build team will include some of our sailors with disabilities, who will be upskilled and paid for their time. Their tasks will include rigging, hull finishing [and] alloy trolley construction. It is our hope that this will enable them to become employed. A small group of them have contributed massively to many of the design features and they have sailed the two prototypes,” he says.

“Following this building project, we would immediately establish a New Zealand class and hold a national regatta. Competitors from New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific have already indicated their intention to be involved. We already have sailors interested in purchasing these yachts from across New Zealand, as well as from Australia and Greece.”

Don also sees this as an opportunity to develop a business employing and upskilling people with disabilities in fibreglass production, alloy welding and rigging, which might enable them to gain further employment.

In December, Sailability Wellington was nominated for a Trade Me Property Community Grant by Wellington real estate agents Paul Doney and Sabine Chong. The charity will put the \$5000 grant towards maintenance and administration costs, including storage, insurance and volunteer support. The couple have a personal connection with Sailability through their son Xervier, who has Down syndrome.

The IHC Foundation has supported Sailability Wellington since 2015. Its most recent grant was towards its national regatta in 2021.

**Left: A 2013 shot showing the building of the ParAble-Whakatauki prototype – from left, Brent Porter, Kelvin Smith, Darrell Smith and Don Manning who contributed to the design. All involved have disabilities.**







## Lockdown never ends for Jo and Harvey

Continued from page 3

safe manner. This includes being able to enter his home, have a shower and move around his community. He is a boy with the same goals, dreams and rights as any child.

Even though Harvey is considered to have very high and complex needs, I have had to advocate for most of his equipment. It's a battle that is fought at every single level. I have had the privilege of being supported by many amazing therapists and medical professionals, and I am very grateful to be supported to care for my son in New Zealand. This situation I'm in is nothing new. People up and down the country are faced with their own unique challenges, but all of us have one thing in common and that is fighting the 'system'.

It wasn't until COVID lockdowns that the majority of the population got a taste of what it is like to live in isolation, with barriers restricting everyday lives. It meant having to go without, having limitations imposed, and adapting to life in an unprecedented way. Ironically, for me and many others, we felt like we had been in training for this for years. Many special needs families are forced to find coping strategies and to learn new skills, such as living on a very limited income. Practising gratitude is a big part of this process.

My life has been extremely busy in the past few years. My mother was diagnosed with motor neurone disease, my younger brother passed away six weeks after her diagnosis and that left me to organise my older brother with autism into supported living for the first time. It has been

a difficult time navigating the system for three of my closest family members. It has been a time of many extreme lows.

One of the things I have gone without over the years has been the ability to pursue a relationship. For many years I simply didn't have the energy or time to commit to someone.

A glimmer of hope came when, due to Harvey's change of needs, I successfully applied to be a paid full-time carer. My responsibilities haven't changed, but the funding and the flexibility have felt empowering. I feel for the first time that my role as Harvey's carer, doing all of the 24/7 on-call things that are impossible to recruit a part-time carer for, is valued. I celebrated by spontaneously organising a wedding.

A while ago I met a man I felt a special bond with. Our journey has not taken the usual route. We still don't live together, but we have made a commitment to each other and we are navigating life together and figuring things out. My new husband has a big heart and is gentle, kind, loving, calm, patient and funny. These qualities mean we can be a family, however that looks. We can now dream and plan for a future together. My husband knew from the moment he met us that we came as a package. He sees beyond Harvey's disability to the funny, cheeky and clever boy that he is. A boy with rights, dreams and hopes just like any other.

See 'Carers speak up about what needs to change' on page 20.

**Top left: Harvey Ellis with Jo's late brother Scott.**

**Right centre: Husband Chris with Harvey.**





## SECTOR

**Heather Walker is working on making herself redundant. That will only happen when Nelson's Inclusive Sports Trust achieves its goal and disabled sports players are accepted into mainstream sports clubs.**

Heather has coached basketball and athletics for 40 years and has seen many disabled children along the way who had no way to join in sports alongside their siblings and friends. She decided to change that.

In 2006 Heather asked the Nelson Basketball Association to establish a basketball competition for players with learning disabilities. That was the start of the Fulton Hogan League and the Inclusive Sports Trust.

The Inclusive Sports Trust now covers many sporting codes in Nelson and reaches up to 300 disabled sports players a year from ages five to 40-plus.

"It's something I absolutely believe in, and I really enjoy. You see the change in the participants – their confidence. It does open doors."

Yet Nelson remains the only city in New Zealand with a disabled sports league. Heather says there are other organisations for disabled players, including Special Olympics and the Halberg Games, but she says families want to share the everyday experience of participating in sport together in the same venues.

The Trust's disabled players use the same courts and sports fields as everyone else. "We have always insisted on being where the heart of sport is. If people aren't seen, how are they recognised?"

The basketballers get a huge boost from the support and coaching provided by local NBL basketball heroes the Nelson Giants. Each season the Fulton Hogan League basketballers play one game at half-time during a Nelson Giants' game.

Waimea College student Jack Doocey, now aged 20 and close to two metres tall, has been playing basketball and football with the Inclusive Sports Trust for 12 years. He started with futsal ball skills then joined Junior Jammers, a basketball



# Clubs open doors to disabled players

programme designed for children aged five to 12 years with supported learning needs. He also signed up to Junior Kickers, a programme for young footballers offered by the Trust from 2012 to 2017.

Jack now participates in the senior basketball league, in his college team and, for one afternoon each week during school terms, he is involved in its multi-sport programme, where he gets to play a range of sports with clubs all over Nelson.

Sandra Doocey, Jack's Mum and a member of the IHC Nelson Association, says it has been very important for her as a parent to be able to make connections with other families. "Heather has made it such

an amazingly safe environment - just knowing that if you went to a soccer game or a futsal game that you are welcome to join in," she says.

"What you get at these things is a very relaxed environment. People can laugh. Children don't stand out and parents feel safe. That has been hugely important. Heather is the most amazing, amazing person."

The IHC Nelson Association has been supporting the Inclusive Sports Trust for several years with the purchase of sports equipment.

The Inclusive Sports Trust offers not only basketball and football; but its multi-sport programme for young people transitioning from school





introduces players to a whole range of sporting codes – everything from boxing, swimming, rugby and badminton to mini golf and tennis.

“We go into a different organisation each week. We have visited at least 20 community-based sports organisations this year. It really does break down barriers. Some of the young people end up joining. The coaches can see the ability and the potential.”

Heather says they now have sports organisations asking how they can get involved. Forty young people were involved in multi-sport in 2023.

“The concept behind the Trust is that sport is a vehicle for change. In time

we won’t need an inclusive sports trust.”

**Previous page: Jack Doocey gets to play a range of sports with clubs all over Nelson.**

**Top left: Ten-year-old Jack at Junior Kickers.**

**Above: Basketballer Jack Doocey playing in the Fulton Hogan League.**

**Right: Heather Walker, one of the founders of the Inclusive Sports Trust, is committed to getting sports clubs to open up to disabled players.**







## Friends have a special reason to meet

### IHC

**In December, Auckland restaurants were full of people enjoying Christmas get-togethers and the start of the summer holidays. Among them, one group had a different reason to celebrate.**

Josie Hyslop and Robyn Forgie from Auckland's North Shore, and John Gill and Peter Ranby from West Auckland, met as part of the IHC Volunteer Friendship Programme in its early days.

IHC launched its Volunteer Friendship Programme 20 years ago in response to a call from people with intellectual disabilities living in IHC residences, who wanted to make friends and to feel included in the communities in which they lived.

Josie and Robyn first met 16 years ago. Since that first meeting, the women have ticked off many good times. "We have done a lot of local outings over the years," Josie says. "When Robyn was more able-bodied we went for boat rides across the Waitemata Harbour, train rides and general sightseeing, enjoying car rides with stopovers for coffee all over Auckland – mall shopping, getting our nails done.

"Robyn enjoys a chat and anything that makes her laugh. It makes me very happy to hear her laugh.

"Lunch at my place where she can catch up with my family is always a hit

– a glass of wine on those special days, birthdays and family celebrations."

John and Peter have been friends for 14 years and, like Josie and Robyn, the friendship includes John's family.

"If I was not home from work, or was out mowing the lawns, Peter would happily chat to my wife and kids," John says. "Peter and I had a year before my family and I moved to Nigeria. During these two years our contact was minimal. When we returned to New Zealand, we just picked up from where we were."

John says Peter is particularly interested in science and technology, music, fashion, nuclear power, atomic structure and chemistry. "Peter will converse at length on any of these.

"Peter writes me a list of the things he wants to research. We look them up, find some images and supporting text with dates and inventors – then print. Peter files this in a folder that is frequently referenced. He loves the information, but it's the time spent together during the collection that seems important. Peter is constantly amazed at how little I know," John says.

"Pete reminds me to stop and look at life through someone else's perspective. He reminds me that frequent, seemingly insignificant, actions can have positive impact on someone else's life.

"My kids, now grown, have always

been accepting of those who face different challenges in life. Peter has played a part in that education.

"Every phone call, every meeting, Peter has always asked after the wellbeing of my wife and each of my kids," John says.

"Peter has his own family who have spent a lifetime caring for and loving him. It's a privilege to be able to assist in some small way."

Peter says John is a good person. "We are both funny." He says they enjoy visiting museums. "I tend to go to [the] War Memorial Museum and then MOTAT. We do have coffees out too," he says. "I introduced my brother to him – Bruce.

"At first I had another buddy, but it didn't work out. That is when I got John Gill. But John Gill is the best because he has stayed with me the longest."

IHC's volunteer friendship programme is about making a positive change in someone's life and gaining a new friend in the process. It is not time specific. There is choice and flexibility. The emphasis is on being out in the community having fun with someone who has shared interests with you. For more information, visit [ihc.org.nz/get-involved/volunteer](http://ihc.org.nz/get-involved/volunteer)

**Above: Friends go the distance (from left) Josie Hyslop, Robyn Forgie, John Gill and Peter Ranby.**



# Big present brings huge smiles



## IHC

### **A big present brought a lot of smiles to the McComb household in Levin just before Christmas.**

A delivery truck arrived with a special set of bunks for seven-year-old Tyler, which Mum Emma McComb and brother Logan hope will mean a better night's sleep for the whole family.

Tyler was only a day old when he had a major stroke that caused paralysis on his right side and affected his development. As a result, Tyler struggles with many day-to-day activities. "He falls through the gaps everywhere," Emma says. "Everything is a struggle."

But one of the hardest things he faces is the pain at night in his right leg that often prevents him – and the rest of the family – sleeping.

He needed a new bed and a mattress with better lumbar support to correct his posture and lessen the chronic pain. With the support of IHC, he now has his new bunks – a double bed on the bottom so he can sprawl out, and a single bed on the top so his mother or 12-year-old brother can have the

occasional 'sleepover' in his room when he is in pain.

The family was buzzing after Tyler's first night in his new bed. "I think it's going to help him sleep better," Emma says. "He was very uncomfortable at night, but last night he slept all night. He was so, so excited – just the smile on his face."

The bunk beds were arranged by Horowhenua IHC Family-Whanau Liaison Suzanne Downes. "Getting a better sleep will hopefully help him participate more fully in activities at school and home during the day," Suzanne says. "Tyler has significant pain in his leg at night-time due to his hemiplegia. Mum has to massage his leg and apply heat packs – a restless night does not bode well for the following day at school.

"There was great excitement in the household when they heard that he was getting a new bunk bed from The Bunk House and a brand-new supportive mattress from teddy – both Kiwi companies," she says. "The founder and CEO of teddy discounted the price of the mattresses."

Suzanne says the rewarding part of her Family-Whanau Liaison role is

being able to help families and make a difference in their lives.

### **Above and below: Tyler is hoping for a better night's sleep, thanks to his new bunks.**







## Carers speak up about what needs to change

### IHC FOUNDATION

**In a series of nationwide meetings, family carers are being encouraged to talk about the pressures of supporting disabled family members and what would make a difference to them.**

Carers NZ Chief Executive Laurie Hilsgen says there are more than one million family carers in New Zealand whose work is largely hidden.

“Family-whānau and aiga carers have had few opportunities to connect and share since the COVID-19 pandemic. Service disruptions and worker shortages have placed more pressure on families to step up and they have provided more care and support than usual since 2020,” she says.

“We are aware through our research that the wellbeing of family carers is the lowest Carers NZ has seen in 25 years. More than 70 percent say they are isolated and lonely, more than two-thirds are experiencing anxiety and depression and there is a pervasive sense of hopelessness emerging in our 0800 helpline

dealings with carers in the disability space.

“We aim to listen, identify regional issues, and help to resolve these – and also to provide information that ensures families are aware of available support and how to access it.”

Aside from the hui, Carers NZ will commission Synergia to rerun its 2022 State of Caring research. The first report, *The State of Caring in Aotearoa*, was based on survey feedback from 1650 carers of all ages; it made 12 recommendations for increased support, but Laurie says carers are still waiting for real progress in areas such as improved financial recognition and respite.

She is hopeful that Disability Issues Minister Penny Simmonds, who advocated for carers as National Party spokesperson before the election, will support change. “We look forward to working with her and others in the new government to ensure family carers are recognised and protected.”

Laurie says the purpose of the hui around New Zealand is to listen to family carers of all ethnicities and ages, rural and urban, to get a sense of their wellbeing and their concerns and to hear their calls to action for better support. It is also an opportunity to share information and to clear up confusion surrounding what support is available from government agencies such as Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People.

“In terms of Whaikaha, we think it needs to listen more to family-whānau. Whaikaha needs to provide clearer guidelines about how flexible funding can be used and also to promote this help, including options about how family carers can be paid. People aren’t always aware of what is allowed or available.”

Laurie is expecting the hui to reinforce what is already known – that carers struggle to take breaks from their caring role, they need better access to good quality and reliable services, and more attention needs to be paid to carers’ own wellbeing.

The Kōreroero – Community Conversations hui will run until the end of 2024 to encourage carers to come out and say what’s on their minds. The hui are being funded by Carers NZ and the IHC Foundation.

Laurie says initial carer gatherings have been held in Southland and Napier. “We have got a lot more to go and some will be in partnership with other organisations, including IHC.” Meetings will target communities that other consultations don’t reach.

“There are quite a few places that don’t get included in government consultations, like the West Coast, South Canterbury and other rural areas.”

Between February and April, hui will be held in Northland, Waikato, Canterbury, South Canterbury and Wellington. Meetings will be held in other regions through the year. For more information about the Kōreroero – Community Conversations, email [centre@carers.net.nz](mailto:centre@carers.net.nz)

**Above: The wellbeing of family carers is the lowest seen by Carers NZ in 25 years. Stock image.**



# Roving coach to build riding skills

## IHC FOUNDATION

**Riding for the Disabled Coach Sharon Aldersley is saddling up for her role as Roving Coach. This year she will share her expertise with 20 Riding for the Disabled groups throughout the country, thanks to a grant from the IHC Foundation.**

The IHC Foundation has contributed \$50,000 to fund one year of visits, and this will be matched for a second year by New Zealand Riding for the Disabled (NZRDA). By the end of two years, Sharon will have visited around 50 groups and been in contact with more than 1000 riders.

“The groups have been asking for hands-on training specific to their riders and their ride teams for a while now,” says NZRDA Chief Executive Donna Kennedy. Donna says Sharon, a trained physiotherapist and qualified NZRDA coach, has been working with the Tauranga RDA since 2009.

The national organisation has already drawn on her expertise as a national coach with some funding from Sport New Zealand to pilot the initial concept. The IHC Foundation funding will see the role fully rolled out across the country.

Sharon will tailor her coaching to what each group needs, and she will be working mainly with the organisations’ coaches, many of whom are newer coaches who are working through their NZRDA coaching qualifications.

“What they really miss is someone hands-on with them, their volunteers and their riders,” Donna says. “She will be adapting the programme to what that group needs.”

The organisation has 180 coaches, 3000 volunteers and about 3200 riders. Many of the groups serve rural and remote locations. Sharon will focus on riders with the highest and most complex needs. The majority of



riders have an intellectual disability or multiple disabilities. Sharon will educate coaches so they can continue to mentor and upskill their volunteers. She will be starting her sessions with Te Aroha RDA, Central Taranaki RDA, Hāwera RDA and Whanganui RDA.

NZRDA says riding can help disabled people with physical and social skills. It can also assist with reading, counting, identifying colours, concentration and following instructions.

IHC Foundation Executive Director Larna Harding says the Foundation has received applications from

several Riding for the Disabled Associations over the past few years.

“Trustees have always held high regard for the programme and supported some individual groups with smaller grants. However, they wanted to contribute in a way that would benefit all clubs nationally and have an ongoing impact.”

**Above: New Roving Coach for New Zealand Riding for the Disabled Sharon Aldersley will share her expertise with groups throughout the country.**





## Cooking classes take it to the next level

IHC

**Young people are lining up to join cooking classes at Comcol North Canterbury thanks to a partnership between Comcol and the IHC North Canterbury Association.**

The classes kicked off last year and 21 trainee cooks each spent 9–10 weeks in the Comcol kitchen learning about equipment safety, hand hygiene, safe food handling and food shopping.

Association committee member Kay Pearce says the introductory courses will continue in 2024 for students 18 and over. This year the project will also move up a level with graduates from the basic course being subsidised by the association to enrol in a Level 2 course.

“We are going to subsidise it by 50 percent. The committee feels this is a fair way of sharing funding to those in our community with intellectual disabilities and ensure as many people as possible have the opportunity of extending their skills learnt in Level 1,” Kay says.

Comcol Programme Coordinator and Tutor Brooke Close will run the two courses, supported by Faye Gread. Brooke says the advanced course, being offered initially as a pilot, builds

on the trainees’ kitchen skills with more meal-based cooking, but adds an introduction to barista skills and education outside the classroom. Both courses take seven students and start in February.

Brooke says the courses are not just about cooking. “We collect the eggs from the chickens and gather food from the garden.” And she says there’s a lot of socialising.

The IHC North Canterbury Association committee came up with the funds to pay for three sessions in 2023. The introductory courses are fully funded by the association.

**Top: Trainee cooks celebrate the end of their 2023 course with Christmas treats (from left: Nathan Begley, Sarah Stalker, Richard Bisley, Kelly Gilbert, Bayden Doggett, Brooke Close (Tutor), Zara Backhurst, Emma Tull and Noah Fearnley.**

**Above right: Emma Tull with the chickens that supply the freshest eggs to the Comcol kitchen.**

**Right: Kelly Gilbert makes her Christmas chocolates with white chocolate and sprinkles.**







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# Son calls for donations to IHC as ‘last good deed’

## IHC

**Sandra Dunning, a former IHC Pukekohe Op Shop volunteer, dropped off some Christmas biscuits to volunteers in the shop a week before Christmas. On Boxing Day she died in a house fire.**

Her son, Scott Dunning, set up a Givealittle page as “a last good deed” in her memory for the benefit of three charities that were important to her – IHC, Women’s Refuge and Sands NZ, a charity supporting parents who have lost a baby.

Sandra was a keen volunteer some years ago at the former Pukekohe IHC Op Shop in Seddon Lane. Scott believes she worked there for about 10 years and finished up in 2016 or 2017.

“Mum gravitated to anyone who needed a hand. For the intellectual disability community in Pukekohe, Mum would have seen the extra barriers and seen the struggle and was keen to help. Mum loved them dearly,” Scott says.

“She also loved the Pukekohe IHC Op Shop for the caring and giving community that’s formed around it. The other volunteers and the regular customers quickly became Mum’s friends, which were her family of choice.

“She was a whirlwind of visits and calls, bringing with her home-made jam and baking; prepared meals to pop in the freezer; or anything else she knew you needed. To anyone in need, she would always offer help, even if she had only met them minutes before. She gave all of this freely, despite for most of her life having little money of her own.

“With her booming, infectious laugh and complete lack of a filter, Sandra was the glue that held the people around her together,” Scott says.

Long-time Op Shop volunteer Elaine Brown recalls working with Sandra at the previous shop. “She just loved strawberries. She would have strawberry pictures on her cupboards. She had a full apron with a panel of strawberries.”

Op Shop manager Kathleen Felix says she only knew Sandra as a customer. “She would come into the shop every week.” Kathleen says that in the week before Christmas she brought in cookies for two of the volunteers and some jam for anyone who wanted it.

**Above: Former IHC volunteer Sandra Dunning, who died in a Boxing Day house fire.**



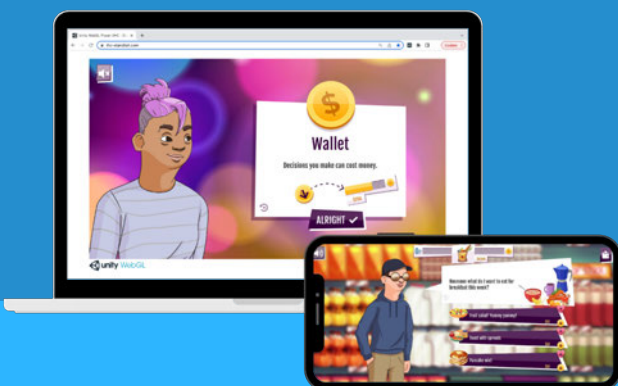


# STAND TALL

A fun and educational game

Stand Tall is a free budgeting game designed for young New Zealanders, including people with intellectual disabilities, neurodiversity and autism, to help them learn about managing money.

With support from The Holdsworth Charitable Trust, IHC teamed up with InGame and worked together on different scenarios and designs until this fun game was ready to



Visit: [ihc.org.nz](http://ihc.org.nz) or scan

