

newsletter

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Community worker Janice Noble with workshop manager Marty Bowen, at the Green Bikes Trust workshop, Palmerston North.

On yer bike! – A free healthy transport option

The Green Bikes Trust is a health-promoting community initiative in Palmerston North. It provides a means of free active transport to children, students, the unemployed, new settlers, tourists and many others throughout the city: community bikes for anyone to ride.

The Green Bikes Trust works through building partnerships, creating employment, promoting a healthy lifestyle, influencing healthy public policy, protecting the environment, doing community development – and having a good time!

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Community development: Bikes – the latest health promotion tool

Green Bikes belong to the community – anyone can ride them, for free. The Green Bikes Trust in Palmerston North takes old bikes that people no longer want and restores them to full working condition in their workshop and then the bikes go out into the community for people to freely borrow.

Phoenix Trust started the scheme in 1994. Phoenix is a not-for-profit agency contracted by the Ministry of Social Development to provide employment services for people with disabilities in Palmerston North. The project began with 50 old rusty bikes and ten men of differing ages and ethnicities who wanted employment and when it became a growing concern the Green Bikes Trust was established. Now there are over 2000 bikes, a big workshop with a full-time manager and many volunteers and community groups involved in cycle restoration, recycling and maintenance.

Inspiration came from two sources – the first was the Prince's Trust in the UK where a rehabilitation scheme for prisoners was developed around fixing up old bikes. The second was a scheme in Holland, a flat land perfect for cycling, that has over 50 years experience in developing cycle ways. The Dutch scheme involved fixing old bikes and putting them on the streets for community use.

Janice Gordon, community worker at Phoenix, says, "You get the number 8 wire mentality here in New Zealand, people love to fix things. Working on the bikes the men learn lots of new skills and they are enabled to participate in and contribute to the community. They can take on a valued and recognised role, whereas before they were unemployed and undervalued. In this way it's not just bikes that are restored – it's people!" She adds that the work also helps cut through the social isolation that many unemployed people experience.

Since 1999 Marty Bowen has been the full-time employed manager of the workshops and he's been involved with Green Bikes since 1995. He worked as a volunteer for the first four years: "It's been a long probation!" says Marty with a chuckle. A wide variety of volunteers now work with Marty fixing and maintaining the bikes and at the same time increasing their work skills, including engineering know-how. The volunteers include men who have been long-term unemployed, teens from Kids at Risk, people from IHC and senior citizens.

The workshops provide a place of positive male role models – men contributing to society, mentoring and befriending each other. It is a safe learning environment without any pressure to get things right first time or quickly. Most people who work in the workshops also use the Green Bikes to get around and so their freedom is enhanced, their fitness increases and the range of their choices is expanded. As skills and self-confidence increase many of the volunteers then move into paid employment in the wider community.

Marty and the men in the workshops recondition worn or old bikes up to safe standards. If a bike cannot be made safe they strip it down and use the parts. If it's not good enough for parts the metal is recycled in other ways, eg. currently work on perfecting a design for a bike stand made from old bike frames is underway in partnership with students at Massey.

From green to mufti

In the original Green Bike Scheme the idea was that people could pick up a green bike from Point A and leave it at their destination, Point B, for anyone else to use. The bikes are parked at cycle stands all around the city in shopping areas and points of interest and activity. When the cyclists want to go back from Point B to Point A they pick up another bike to do so. The bikes that are used in this way are all painted green and they have green cycle helmets to match.

Some community members wanted long-term loans of bikes that they could lock and use exclusively. In response the Green Bikes Trust developed Mufti Bikes – not painted green, but still restored and maintained by the Green Bikes



*Two young Green Bike riders collect their bikes and helmets.
Photo: James Unwin*

Workshop. Mufti bikes were originally made available only to children in foster care and adults seeking employment. Now any community group, school or tertiary institute can refer someone for a Mufti Bike. People might want a bike for a full day, if they are tourists for example, or they may be taking university courses and need a bike for a few months or a term. The borrower of a Mufti Bike visits the workshop to select a bike and can use it for as long as it's needed – it won't cost a thing.

About a third of the current bike stock are Green Bikes, for general community use, and the rest are now Mufti Bikes.

Partnerships – Everybody wins!

- Palmerston's City Council was one of the earlier leaders in the development of a City Cycle Plan – and has developed a comprehensive plan with high standards. John Hornblow, City Councillor and also chairman of the Green Bikes Trust says that the Council is committed to encouraging cycling and is working at regulatory levels, as well as via information dissemination. Council is pleased to promote this form of sustainable transport for the health and environmental benefits that accrue. Activities to improve cycling conditions include bike-friendly traffic lights, provision and excellent upkeep of cycle ways. One example is that Council service responds to any reports of broken glass in the city within 24 hours. As the Green Bikes Trust is an employment initiative the Council also supports the scheme with some funding.

- Another important partner is Massey University. Massey supplies the Trust with workshop facilities as well as design and research resources. In return the Trust provides the University students with free bikes and it also sorts and handles the University's re-cycling (all except paper).

- Bike shops are supportive of the Trust's work. John Hornblow explains that many of the users of both Green and Mufti bikes cannot afford new bikes as they are from the lower socio-economic sectors of society. Therefore there is no competition with the shops who often donate obsolete stock to the Trust as well as organising promotional events and making donations.

- Community groups and trusts, including Women's Refuge, Prisoners Relief, Barnardos and very many others work with Green Bikes, as well as WINZ referring people who need free transport.

- Health Services refer people recovering from cardiac or knee problems who use the bikes as part of their rehabilitation programmes.

The work of the Green Bikes Trust contributes in so many ways to the wellbeing of a large number of people in Palmerston. As well as the employment and skills development factors, which contribute directly to mental and social wellbeing, there are also a large number of people



*One of the latest designs from the workshop – the Pedicab.
Photo: James Unwin*

getting a lot of healthy exercise. Active transport has many public health benefits – cleaner air, less traffic, a safer environment and healthier people with less obesity and related health problems. There is a low incidence of diabetes in Holland and some people claim that this is because many people in their senior years have been regularly cycling for most of their lives and continue to do so.

“But,” says John “it doesn't stop there – have you heard of our national and international roles?” He explains that many other communities throughout New Zealand have asked for help and advice from The Green Bikes Trust in setting up their own schemes – and in many cases Green Bikes have helped supply some of the bikes for those schemes. Internationally, the Trust has donated 300 bikes to East Timor during the reconstruction there after the devastations of war, and they have also sent 12 bikes to Papua New Guinea.

The expanding circles of wellbeing embrace the City of Palmerston North and are touching other lives around New Zealand and in distant countries, with a sustainable healthy transport option that is free and therefore accessible to those who need it most.

By the way, none of the people featured in this article consider themselves to be Health Promoters as such. But what's in a name? Green Bikes is concerned with social justice, community development, creating sustainable healthy environments and making it easy for people to choose healthy activity. They sure are promoting health.

Isabel Bird

News & events

National Workforce Development – the latest news from the Ministry of Health

Maggie McGregor of the Public Health Directorate of the Ministry of Health is leading the development of a national plan for public health workforce development.

There are a wide range of public health sector workforce development initiatives across New Zealand but there is currently no national programme or framework for planning ongoing development of the public health workforce as a whole. The aim of this project is to develop a planning framework that will guide the development of a strong and competent workforce able to meet the needs of the population.

A number of preliminary initiatives are underway to provide the foundation for the work. Victoria Smith has been compiling a literature review around public health workforce development and a review of previous workforce initiatives. Megan Tunks has been consulting with key informants about the needs of the Maori public health workforce. Chris Webber has been carrying out similar work around the workforce needs of Maori health protection and the SHORE Centre has been doing some work identifying the public health needs of the new Primary Health Organisations (PHOs).

Vivienne Head, who has previously been working on the development of the cervical screening workforce strategy has been contracted to project manage the development of the action plan. The first task Vivienne will tackle will be

development of a project plan based on the preliminary information. Tasks over the 03/04 year are likely to include a survey and status report of the public health workforce and of current workforce development training providers and programmes, involvement of key stakeholders and consultation with the public health sector. Pulling together existing information and previous work, such as the work of the Health Promotion Forum in health promotion training and competency development, will be a key part of the work.

Timeframes are not yet established however our goal is to have a basic framework agreed by the middle of 2004 which identifies the key areas for development over a 3-5 year period.

We are compiling a list of people who would like to be involved in this project as it progresses. If you'd like to register your interest please send your contact details to: rockshan_creado@moh.govt.nz

Other contacts:

Vivienne will be the key contact for this project when she commences her role in September. In the interim key contacts for further information are:

Maggie McGregor – Project leader and sponsor:
maggie_mcgregor@moh.govt.nz

Ricky Carr – workforce development workstream leader:
ricky_carr@moh.govt.nz

Maggie McGregor

PHA – New President

Congratulations to Marty Rogers, Ngati Kahu raua Te Rarawa oku Iwi, te Paatu raua Ngati Moetonga oku Hapu. Marty is the new president of the Public Health Association of New Zealand officially taking over the role from Fran McGrath at the PHA Conference held at Turangawaewae Marae, Ngaruawahia in July.

Marty says that being the first Maori woman president of the PHA means that there are lots of expectations from both the Maori community and from the Maori and non-Maori PHA membership. "It's a little bit daunting but I feel confident that I've got the support within the PHA to continue to do the good things that were started by those before me and to add my contribution. While it will be different it will still be consistent with the higher goals and aims of the Public Health Association."

An active member of the PHA for seven years Marty is a very well known for her public health work in Maori for Maori development, policy shifts in contracting with Maori providers, the development of key Public Health messages,



Public Health Leadership through the work of Hapai Te Hauora Tapui, advocacy for Te Pae Mahutonga and many more areas.

As a member of Maori Caucus of the PHA Council Marty was one of the key organisers of this year's PHA Conference at Turangawaewae where a totally new way of approaching this annual event was taken. The theme of the conference was Tino Rangatiratanga in Public Health: Working with Maori & Indigenous Values & Principles. Participants stayed in a single work-stream throughout the conference, examining the strands of the public health model Te Pae Mahutonga as a practical tool for both Maori and non-Maori public health action.

"My impression of the conference," says Marty "was that the way that we did it was new, we broke new ground and therefore the learning and value gained by all the participants was really high. The value of Te Pae Mahutonga as a planning tool will only be realised if ongoing commitment to learning and understanding it as a tool continues post-conference."

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One of the things that Marty is advocating for is that PHA branches throughout the country create opportunities for continued learning and discussion about Te Pae Mahutonga as a model for health promotion and public health developments and delivery that is particularly relevant to Aotearoa. At a national level Marty suggests that there is a need to begin discussions with the Public Health Directorate at the Ministry of Health to identify ways that the current contracting regime can become more responsive to Te Pae Mahutonga.

Mana Wahine

Mana Wahine Week is a celebration that has happened every year since 1993 when it was started by Te Ohu Whakatupu to celebrate the diversity of achievement by Maori women. Since then, the kaupapa has been adopted by many communities as an opportunity to acknowledge their Kuia, Whaea, sisters, daughters and grand-daughters.

The aim for Mana Wahine Week for Gisborne and the East Coast was to encourage Maori women to improve their health and well being. MW Week allows women to acknowledge that they are all special – from Nannies, to Housewives, to Business Women.

In Tairāwhiti, MW Week was celebrated as a community event with a wide variety of activities and input from a wide collective of organisations:

- A Wahine ataahua day which gave all women a chance for some pampering... facials, miri-miri, herbal foot baths, hand and nail care, free blood pressure, weight and glucose tests... Turanga Health.

- The Maori Women's Welfare League had quilt making demonstrations, stone painting, harakeke, chocolate moulding, mahi uku, skin care, shell work, poi making, calligraphy and a variety of Maori fashions.

- The Public Health Unit had a Mana Wahine Fashion Design Award for a wearable arts competition with garments from three categories: Recycled, Healthy theme and Natural fibres. This resulted in an assortment of garments made from flax, feathers, tin, plastic bottle tops, seaweed, sea sponge, cardboard, plastic sheeting etc. To display the garments a street fashion parade was held down the main street of Gisborne that attracted a large audience who were interested in this alternative view of health.

"My catch cry for the coming year is 'Going Places', but I recognise that we can only go places if we go together. That means health promoters, policy makers, funders, researchers, managers and the wider public health community working together. In summary the conference showed that we have the skills, tools and answers. The challenge is for us to see, hear and use them!"

- The Great Cook-Off involving the cooking of many food samples was the initiative of Gisborne District Council with the Mayor actively involved in the cooking.

- Free aqua aerobic sessions were held at the local swimming pool.

- A historical hikoi: Te Kakano nui o Korau was organised by Te Aitanga a Hauiti. This hikoi traced the whakapapa of local iwi to the great tipuna wahine Iranui, and took us to a

journey of discovery to all marae in Hauiti which she had links to.

- Events at Ruatoria, on the East Coast included activities incorporated into the Wananga of Ruataupare ki Tuparoa Marae. Presentations included a Pohutukawa planting project, the design and development of a water feature for the Marae parani, driftwood designs, herbs and succulents garden.

- A spectacular visible celebration was the rich purple hue of 48 banners adorning the mainstreet of the city and highlighted coastal establishments. Each banner depicting Papatuanuku (Mother Earth) as she emerges from the shadows – a message to believe in oneself.

Many hours of commitment from a large group of voluntary

workers and other organisations ensured this week was a success in Tairāwhiti. This joint venture has laid the foundations for future plans to celebrate Matariki, which signifies new beginnings for all the people of Aotearoa. Matariki is the pleiades star cluster which heralds the traditional Maori new year.

Heather Robertson, Te Mana Hauora o te Tarāwhiti



The winning feather outfit of the Mana Wahine Fashion Design Award – designed by Tui Takarangi and modelled by her daughter Tia