

Caring Caller expands into new areas

Caring Caller is growing in demand and expanding its service into new areas.

Caring Caller began in the '90s in response to St John ambulance crews becoming increasingly concerned at the numbers of people they were attending who spent days without speaking to anyone.

The programme was launched in Central Region in 2001, and was initially available in Palmerston North and Feilding. "Around 12 months after it was launched it was introduced in Hawkes Bay and Wellington. In 2002/2003 it was trialled in Wanganui but the uptake was slow and it never really grew until this year," Regional Caring Caller Manager Gael McKechnie says.

"We approached area committees and asked for their support, without it we wouldn't have been able to make it as available as it is now," she says.

In late July the programme was launched in Taranaki where North Taranaki area committee Chairman Doug Ashby helped in its promotion to local media.

The result was several high profile stories in community papers and a high level of interest from prospective volunteers wanting to be part of the service.

"It really helped to raise the profile of Caring Caller and generated a lot of volunteer interest. To date we have sent out more than 30 application packs," Gael says.

While volunteers are recruited and trained the next phase in the Taranaki launch will be to publicise the need for people in need of daily calls.

"We want to make sure that we have a pool of volunteers trained and ready to go before we locate clients for them to call," she says.

As Caring Caller takes off in Taranaki its launch in Wairarapa is underway and future plans include relaunching in Wellington and Horowhenua.

"It's a straight forward programme with the potential to make a lot of difference in peoples lives. We are committed to making it available everywhere where we have other services, but to do this we need the financial support of area committees," she says.

Funded entirely from donations received by St John or local Area Committees Caring Caller is a low cost volunteer driven service that makes a positive difference to everyone involved.



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Friends

A quarterly newsletter for our donors and supporters

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St John

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Health Shuttles support communities

In Central Region Health Shuttle services are the only mode of transport available to an increasing number of people young and old.

In Dannevirke the St John Health Shuttle service is an essential link to health services five days a week as it helps people get to and from appointments at the major hospitals in Palmerston North, Lower Hutt, Masterton and Wellington. For people receiving frequent and ongoing day treatment – such as dialysis or radiology – the issue of transport would be a huge burden if it weren't for the Health Shuttle.

Dannevirke Shuttle Service Co-ordinator, Don Stewart believes Health Shuttle passengers are often independent people without family nearby or who wouldn't consider asking busy friends or family members to step in.

"The shuttle is the perfect solution. People can use the service without feeling like they're putting anyone out. There are no fees or costs to users but if you are able to make a donation any financial support we receive goes to our operation costs," Don explains.

He believes the value of the service goes beyond money. "There's a level of service and care going on here that the community should be very proud of. Our volunteers are completely dedicated and they do an amazing job," he says.

To make the journey for treatment or appointments as effortless as possible volunteers frequently get a paper for passengers to read while they are on dialysis, stop the shuttle on the way home to pick up prescriptions and see people safely inside their homes at the end of a gruelling day.

The Dannevirke Health Shuttle regularly receives letters of gratitude and donations from its passengers but like other St John Health Shuttle services in Feilding, Marton and Pahiatua it is always in need of financial support from local businesses, community groups and other donors.

"Passengers make donations if they are able to but otherwise we look to other sources to help us fund the service. In the past we have received bequests from several estates and community groups." He says.

Every month Central Region's four Health Shuttle Services volunteers contribute more than 1,400 hours of time, travel more than 20,000 km's as they transport more than 1,000 people to specialist and hospital appointments.

The cost of funding regional Health Shuttle services is up to \$20,000 per month. To operate these services funding is provided from community donations, grants and a subsidy from Horizons Regional Council.

St John Health shuttle services for Otaki and Wanganui are currently being explored.



St John Health Shuttle services are an essential link to major hospitals and specialist treatment in our region.

We welcome your support

To donate please call 0800 ST JOHN (0800 785 646)

An automatic \$20 donation can be made through your phone bill by calling 0900 St John (0900 785 646)

www.stjohn.org.nz

Contact us to tell us about the work for St John in your community. To find out more about St John, or how you can volunteer your time or support call **0800 ST JOHN (0800 785 646).**



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COORDINATOR Mark Tregoweth
POST St John, PO Box 681 Palmerston North, 4440
PHONE 06 355 7792
FAX 06 355 7795

Down with blood pressure

On Saturday 12 September St John joined forces with the Stroke Foundation and Lions Clubs nationwide for the blood pressure awareness campaign – Down with Blood Pressure.

The campaign was run at approximately 100 venues nationwide and offered free blood pressure checks to the public.

The idea behind the drive was to raise awareness about the relationship between high blood pressure and strokes.

Each day, seven New Zealanders die from stroke, which equates to more than 2500 per year. It is the leading cause of disability in the country.

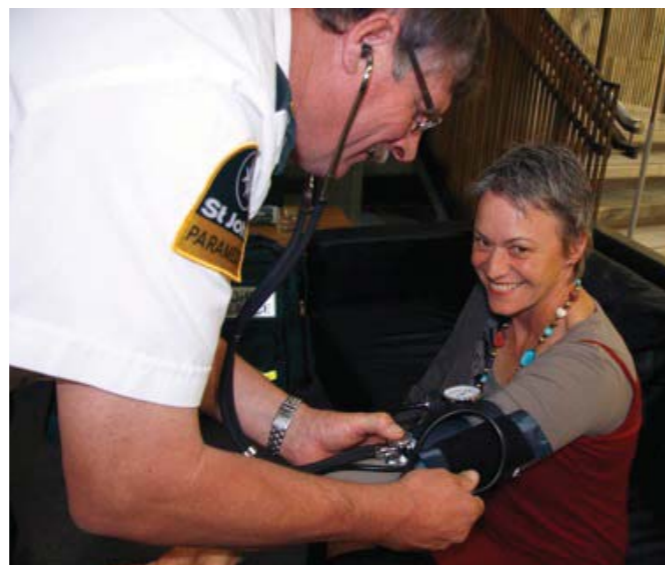
One third of strokes are attributable to high blood pressure and 20 per cent of New Zealanders have high blood pressure but aren't aware of it.

Common risks for stroke include poor diet, excessive alcohol consumption, smoking, obesity, lack of exercise and type two diabetes.

High blood pressure is preventable and treatable but the only way to know if you suffer from high blood pressure is to have regular checks for it.

The project was managed by the Stroke Foundation while the Lions took care of logistics.

St John participated in the campaign to heighten health awareness and show people how easy it is to have regular blood pressure checks.



The project was managed by the Stroke Foundation while the Lions took care of logistics. St John volunteers provided blood pressure checks at each location.

Early results for this year's campaign are encouraging with forecasts of last years total of 3500 checks expected to double.

In Central Region the initiative was supported by a dedicated team of volunteers.

While people queued to be tested at locations spread throughout the lower North Island, Maori Party co-leader and Wanganui Member of Parliament Tariana Turia showed her support at one location actively encouraging regular testing.

Online game

Two St John staff starred in a production for ACC recently. ACC is developing an on-line game featuring safety at home for launch as part of this year's NZ Safety week.

The game includes various options, and the wrong option leads to the player requiring assistance from our ambulance officers.

Jacinta Rangī and Michael Anderson acted as the responding ambulance crew and performed their short piece professionally and acted as great ambassadors for St John.

The game is filmed as "first person," so you never actually see the primary actor. The game is designed to place the player at home in the position of the actor. To do this, the actor had to wear a camera on his head! This caused some interesting equipment placing. Placing an oxygen mask on the patient when his eyes were effectively atop his head, meant the mask had to go onto his forehead!

Activities like this showcase St John and help us to increase our exposure in a positive way. Jacinta and Michael portrayed St John well.



Jacinta Rangī and Michael Anderson on set at the filming of the ACC online game.

A Day in the life of a volunteer

Every day throughout New Zealand hundreds of people support their communities in volunteer roles in vital St John services. Juggling the role of wife, mother and volunteer St John ambulance officer is all in a days work for Jackie Greenall. Below is Jackie's account of a day in her life as a volunteer.

6.30am: My day started on a chilly, wet Saturday morning. Showered, dressed for the day and then fed the animals and had breakfast myself, I am grateful we are not required to be 'on station' in our rural setting unless we are out of the town boundary. Washing is never ending but I managed to get a load started and got the dishes done as well ... maybe it's going to be a 'quiet' day! Quickly wrapped a birthday present for my step-daughter before I gathered up study material, handheld radio and my St John Bag and headed to the station.

8.15am: Arrived at station, 2 other crew were there, we were fortunate to have a '2nd' crew member today. (Often we don't have the luxury as we are so short of volunteers). We discussed the week's events around the station before my crew partner and I headed out to do vehicle checks. It was a bit chilly this particular morning as one of the garage doors had come off its roller during the night and wasn't able to be closed... repair man was on his way!

10.30am: Tea break finished and repair man had arrived. I checked emails and read up on clinical updates.

11.00am: Page for second crew to transport a patient with abdominal pain from their GPs to hospital. The job did not require a second crew member so we still had a full crew on station if required.

11.05am: We went and refuelled the ambulance, which was a good chance to pop into the local shop and quickly purchase some gloves.

11.36am: Priority 1 call to local soccer grounds to a leg injury. An 8 year old male with obvious swelling to his right ankle and he was very cold, we treated his injury and transported the boy, with Dad following, to a GP for further assessment. We stayed with the patient and helped to get him x-rayed etc. This helps to ease the pressure on the staff and can help parents and patients in stressful situations too.

12.35pm: Back at station to restock and clean the ambulance and ensure the paperwork was correct... it's great to get a job but we are mindful that it is often at someone else's unfortunate expense!

1.15pm: Lunch time and discussion about the job and wonder if it will be the only one for the day.

1.40pm: Priority 2 call to a local hospice to transport a frail 74 year old female to CHF for palliative care. Family followed us down, it's a sad time for all.

2.04pm: Priority 1 call as we were transferring our patient into a bed at the hospital. My crew partner went to talk to

the Emergency Call Centre as I sorted out the stretcher and returned to the ambulance. Car off road about 10 minutes south of town, no persons trapped, Fire enroute and Police already in attendance. Possible two patients at scene. On arrival, both patients (males, late teens) were in the police car as it was raining and after a quick assessment and chat with the Police, both were able to walk to the Ambulance unaided. By this time the Fire boys had arrived and set about securing the scene. Full assessment of patients revealed no further injuries except the obvious minor cuts to the back of one patient's hand and some marks where their seatbelts were. Transported patients to a GP for further treatment. Police also attended for further questioning and processing. Messy job this time too – ambulance required lots of cleaning when we finished!!

4.30pm: I was able to go home and help prepare dinner and get the rest of the washing sorted; I will eat when I finish at 7pm. Popped in to stepdaughters and dropped off her birthday present ... she was having a lovely day!

5.35pm: Back on station and my partner and I went over some procedures which is always good to keep up on and this was a good opportunity for a general debrief about the days events.

6.45pm: Night crew arrived and we chatted about the days events and wished them a 'tongue-in-cheek' quiet night as we left at 7pm.

Sometimes we have good days and sometimes we have bad days on station, it's really up to the individual as to how they are defined. It is good to get the jobs because some days take longer to get through than others. I was taught very early in my career as an ambulance officer that things happen in spite of our attendance and all we can do is what we have been trained for – no one expects more than that.

My volunteer work for St John as an Ambulance Officer started nearly nine years ago. I haven't the faintest idea how many hours that would equate to but a rough estimate would be something like 5,600 (doing one shift per week), however I have a suspicion it is considerably more than that!



Being a member of St John is like having an extended family and the friendships forged remain for a lifetime. The support, training and camaraderie reflect the jobs we do within the organisation and this also tells the story of the volunteer; without whom St John, not just as an Ambulance Service, could operate.