

## Liaison Officer Updates AGM 2020

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### Auckland : Rachel Butler

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Auckland Region has had steady member numbers for 2019, from between 100-110 active members and approximately 20-25 non-active. We also have 7 general hospital volunteers and 5 'buddies' spread across Auckland who help with settling in new members. As with all volunteer organisations, our members are the reason we exist at all and if they can no longer visit their placement, then it is normally through a change in their personal circumstances like a new job, increased family commitments or their dog retires.

Our Auckland Group Events volunteers have attended at least 12 University, Expo, Educational presentations, Corporates and the Special Children's Christmas party, with the universities and corporates being generous and grateful for our time. The new Regional Volunteer of the Year award implemented for the 2019 year was also much appreciated.

Finally, I'd like to extend a huge heartfelt thank you to my co-assistants, Kim Gruebner for placements and Nicole Wallace for events. I would not be able to handle the large Auckland region without their help and support. 2020 is going to be a much-changed landscape with the Covid-19 crisis but I am positive we will come out the other side intact and ready to resume where we left off.

### Blenheim : Wendy Reynolds

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#### Lockdown 2020

The week of lock down, I had a planned get together for our hard-working members, but I cancelled it when I had been in contact with a new arrival from China that stayed in my home, I then put myself into self-isolation for 2 weeks, as I visit people that are in their 80's. A very short time after that some rest homes also went into Lockdown, then the whole country.



As I did not want to just end our visits like that, I decided to get permission from our members to send out homemade cards, to places they visit. It was a bigger job that I thought it would be, as I only have a black and white printer it had to be black card. Lucky I had some left over from the Care & Craft days that I volunteered at for 10 years teaching seniors how to make cards (before that group closed down).

Each member was sent an email asking to help me personalize the card with a personal message from them. I sent the cards out in week 3, in the hope they will not be so busy and that they

were happy to receive them. I am looking forward to us all returning to our visits as soon as it is safe for our seniors. You don't realize how much you enjoy the visits until they are stopped.

I also sent out many other similar cards requesting permission to start visits after lock down. I enclosed our printed information flyer and contact details, and for these cards I used new members photos of their dogs and my own dog Crystal (Toy Poodle) who just can't get to see enough people. She's a people's dog, If you would like a visit please give me a call.

## **Foxton/Levin : Sue Clarke**

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Well the year has evaporated very quickly, and we haven't had nearly as many social activities together as we had hoped. We started celebrating Founders Day on May 11<sup>th</sup> 2019 with a shared afternoon tea, some doggy games and presentation of certificates. Everybody continued to do their visiting and a few new members were assessed and allotted a place to visit. We also saw the departure of a couple of members, one to travel overseas and one through ill health. Some of us took part in Manawatu regional visits e.g. to UCOL, Massey University Feilding Agricultural Show and Rural Games in Palmerston North on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2020, the day before the Covid-19 became real to all of us! During the winter I was invited to speak to the local Grey Power group and to the Muhunua East Rural Women about the work of Canine Friends in the community. Peri came too-of course!

Some members attended the regional Christmas Canine Friends gathering in Bulls on Nov 30<sup>th</sup>. On Dec 1<sup>st</sup> the Horowhenua Dog Obedience club were asked to take part in Santa Paws in the Park for children and dogs to meet Santa, along with displays by a local vet and a pet food supplier. I took the opportunity to use our newly arrived display kit and along with a few members we flew the Canine Friends flag. We had a group visit to The Madison for a Christmas party on 4<sup>th</sup> December, followed by coffee and cake at a nearby café. On January 16<sup>th</sup> three members attended a Dementia Day care unit in Levin to let the patients have a pat and see what tricks our lovely dogs could do to entertain them.

Once again, the Canine Friends made their presence felt at the Horowhenua AP&I show in Levin over the weekend of 18/19 January as part of the Obedience club demonstrating with Agility, CGC and Canine Friends dogs in attendance. The last promotion of the year was at the invitation of the local Council at the Levin Kowhai dog park, promoting dog activities one sunny evening in February.

## **Hastings : Chris Patridge & Katja Williams**

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Our membership is steadily rising. We had articles in "Hawkes Bay Today" magazine and on the Hawkes Bay App. These created a lot of interest and some applications.

We started visits at the Hawkes Bay Prison during the year. A long process but it all finally got there. The prison has several very dedicated and enthusiastic team members who saw the benefits in dog visits and worked very hard to overcome the many obstacles. We now have four dog teams visiting so they have one dog per week in the Intervention and Support Unit. They are thrilled with the results.

We held our first Founders Day event which was a great success.

We had various get togethers and a few group visits and Christmas visits. Katja organised a group visit to the Pharmacists Conference at the Hospital in February. They were particularly interested in dog visits to ICUs. As Katja visits the Hastings ICU she was able to give them the benefits from personal experience.

And then there was Lockdown.

## **Kapiti : Jim Eade & Lynley Evans**

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We have had a successful year in that we have most rest homes in our area being visited. Every visit brings joy in different ways to the people we visit. Some people love to talk to us generally, others about the pets they have had, others love to cuddle and pat the dogs while others just like to watch the interactions between the dog and the people.

The other highlight for us has been the meet ups where our Kapiti people and dogs have been able to get to know each other. This has been valuable for us to feel togetherness as a group and know that others are doing similar work. Unfortunately, our last meet up was interrupted by lock down (as were our visits) and we are looking forward to a future when we can once again continue to bring joy to the people we visit.

## **Lower Hutt : Rachel Davison**

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This year Eileen and I attended the Governor Generals Garden Party on Thursday 6th February. It was one of the highlights of my year, even though Eileen told me she had attended before. It was a beautiful day and there was lots of lovely food.

Sadly, there was only one dog there (that of course Eileen and I had to talk to). It was an Epilepsy Support Dog representing the Epilepsy Foundation. Eileen and I were both disappointed that we didn't take a Canine Friend with us, as the party definitely could have done with more dogs present!. We did get special treatment though and made a grand entrance with all the diplomats and ambassadors and a

personal escort around to the main lawn. As Wallace and Gromit would say "What a Grand Day Out!"

I have a photo of the party for you

## Manawatu : Ann Evans & Kaye Harkness

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At present we have 52 members which will be up from other years. Six of these are either just starting, been assessed but in the early stages. We have 7 supporting members who either have retired their dogs from regular visits, suffer from ill health either themselves or their dog and they will most likely join us on events and get together. One of our dogs has had a completely new knee replacement while one member has had hip surgery and another knee replacement surgery. As what generally happens, we have had our canines who have left us having sadly ventured over the Rainbow Bridge. We do miss them.

The joining of Palmerston North and Manawatu Rural Canine Friends groups has proved great with us retaining 2 Liaison Officers and now having an Event coordinator and this has worked extremely well. We now operate a "closed" Facebook page which is very popular with our members.

All our rest home visiting is going well with members in all of them with some visiting more than one facility. The Palmerston North Hospital Children's ward has a weekly visitor on a roster system and it looks like we will soon be visiting 2 further hospital wards. We visit Ideal Services in Palmerston North and Feilding. We have 2 reading dogs in schools, one at Russell Street School and one at Takaro School. We had one visiting Freyberg High especially in their Special Needs class but that now happens when asked, usually monthly. We have a member who assists a special needs boy one afternoon a week at Russell St School. We have a member regularly visiting the Linton Camp Ruahine Kindergarten.

We have been contacted for visiting to homes by Sandra Marshall HCN Specialist for the Ministry of Children. She works with high and complex needs children. I had a meeting with her explaining what we actually do, and she was delighted to spread the word around her colleagues about what we do and hoped to ask for our assistance with children at some stage. Fiona Cain from Supergrans also enquired about our visiting lonely, ill or depressed people in their homes but at this stage we have heard nothing more from her.

Our members have enjoyed many community events during the year. We were invited to the Opening of Altimate Park in Palmerston North (a new dog friendly park), the Dogs in Togs Event at the Makino Pool in Feilding in April which gained us new members and much praise for our dogs, some walked the Memory Walk for Dementia in Feilding and were invited in to the afternoon tea with dogs as a thank you and some attended the Animal Blessing at St Peters Church in Palmerston North. (A special invite came from the church inviting us to attend which we usually have attended other years but not by invite so that was lovely to receive). Manawatu A&P Show was another event we attended and in March we were present mingling with the crowd on both the Saturday and Sunday by roster at the NZ Rural Games in the Square in Palmerston North by invite.

We celebrated Founders Day at the Feilding Dog Training Club Ground at Timona Park at the end of May where we had a shared lunch with celebratory cake, played games and had a good chat about everything and presented many Award Certificates. At the end of November, we held our Christmas get together with invites to Wanganui and Horowhenua to join us. This was all about our wonderful dogs including MacDonalds hamburgers for lunch, a Christmas dress up and a visit from Mrs Claus who gave every dog a dog biscuit treat pack. We also had games but unfortunately it was probably the hottest day of the year so these were curtailed somewhat. The dogs enjoyed their special day.

As a start to the New Year we had a get together at the Esplanade in Palmerston North where we all including our dogs of course, rode the model train around the grounds which was named “The Canine Express” in our honour, quite a treat for all. After a short walk we all had lunch at a nearby café with our dogs inside the café.

We have continued to be invited out as a group especially to students. We regularly attend Massey University, both for Study Week and Orientation Time, UCOL in Palmerston North have us regularly during study time and IPU continue to invite us as they love our visits and this year a special visit was made to showcase Student Life on Campus with some high dignitaries and promotional people attending. We have had invites to Freyberg High library and this time included their Special Needs Unit. A visit was also made to the early childhood centre Magic Sparks in Palmerston North. After every visit there is always a visit to the nearby dog friendly cafes if they wish. Later in the year Freyberg High Student Assn dedicated their mufti day proceeds to us as their charity of choice and added a doggy walk in the evening to raise even more funds. At another time we were witnessed on our visit to the students at UCOL and we were approached by a group also wishing to make us their charity of choice in their drama performance named “A Performance for Pups”.

At Christmas time we made group visits to rest homes bringing the Christmas spirit to them. Ranfurly Residential Care Centre and Nelson Street Residential Care Centre were our Feilding visits with shared lunch in the park and the Brightwater Rest home and Olive Tree rest home in Palmerston North were also visited with lunch at a dog friendly café later in December. Horowhenua invited us to join them on their Christmas visit to Ultimate Care Madison in Levin and some of us travelled down to support them. Palmerston North Hospital invited us to visit their Opal Ward where their elderly residents are, so a small group enjoyed that visit plus a photo session in their Grotto and many pats and chats on our way. We also are very lucky that Horowhenua members love to join us on events which is great to work together.

Covid-19 has certainly stopped us in our tracks. All members have been encouraged to communicate with their visiting facilities by email, letters or by videos and most of them have done well with that. Some have come back to us saying they have sent stories etc to their rest home but they have had no recognition of them using it or even receiving it. This cannot be helped as everyone is under a lot of strain and just to do these things is great news. In my case the rest homes I visit are very grateful and use them as therapy.

We have kept in touch with everyone by group emails and our Facebook page on a regular basis. Everyone is extremely keen to get back into their visiting and I have heard there are dogs who refuse to get out of the car as they think it is a visit time or go crazy when they see a red scarf.

Naturally we do realise that we do visit the most vulnerable people and appreciate all that the Canine Friends Committee is doing to touch base with Diversional Therapists etc and await the word to approach our facilities to once again do what we are all passionate about.

## **Oamaru : Cath Rivron**

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Unfortunately time has ticked along for Oamaru and our members ... due to health we have lost one dog to the paddock in the sky and another has ended their visiting time, Willow and I find his visits stopped a long time ago due to his age and our other time commitments. One of our members is giving their dog a mental and health break to work out how we can move forward with visiting for him. Another member continues to visit but not in Oamaru.

A sad round up as of May, none of our dogs are visiting.

## Queenstown : Beryle Ravenwood

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Greetings from the Team in Queenstown and Cromwell.

We have now, over the past year spread our wings or should that be “Paws” to Cromwell, visiting the Ripponburn Hospital and Home, ongoing visits to Bupa Lake Wakatipu Care Home – culminating with our Reading in School Programme at Remarkable’s Primary School. Each bring their special moments – our characters amongst the residence of each home and the absolute delight of the kids at school when they get to read to the dogs.

Our highlights of the year would have to be attending a church funeral service with 6 of our wonderful canine friends to see off their beautiful and much-loved Agnus from Bupa Lake Wakatipu Home – giving her a guard of honour. She adored our visits, so it was very fitting she had her “doggies” at the end of her journey.

Our Christmas party at Bupa Lake Wakatipu Care Home is always a highlight for us and the Residence – lots of fun and laughter shared by all – dress ups and crackers a must, then there was our gorgeous resplendent 4 pawed tutu’s and tiara’s brigade in the form of fru-fru skirts and deer antlers with sparkle from our Cromwell crew.

To my incredible team – my sincere thanks for all your time, support and for sharing your amazing canine family with so many.

Wishing you all a very exciting and rewarding year ahead.

## Rotorua : Julie Cowell

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We went to the Polytech here in Rotorua and Taupo with the dogs which was very exciting for both the students and dogs. We usually only go to rest homes (here in Rotorua) so that was something different for our volunteers.

We did have some sad news, we lost three therapy dogs in the last year, but I have a new puppy who is looking to be a great therapy dog already. She is an eight-month Rottie who just enjoys humans and dogs. She waits for and greets all the caregivers who come to our house to see my husband and keeps a permanent smile on his face.

One of our volunteers (Mary Barton) was selected by the Daily Post to be featured in their article about special people in Rotorua. Mary is an older volunteer who visits with her older dog each week and really enjoys it.

## Tauranga : Janet Fosberry

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Tauranga has been a growing area for some time, and we have the privilege to be allowed to access the hospital without too many hurdles to jump. But it is still quite a process to go through to

get the green light for each applicant. Health questions, police checks and confidentiality agreements. But once that is done and we have had a couple of buddy visits with either the Canine Friends Pet Therapy liaison officer or the hospital volunteer manager we are on our way. It is a very rewarding time to be had by both handler and dog.

We have had permission in the last year to now enter the Cancer Centre where our little dogs go and visit the people getting chemo. This is a trying time for the patient as they often find themselves feeling anxious or lonely. So, to be distracted by a fluffy little thing is wonderful!! The dog handlers who work in the Cancer ward are amazing and spend as much time as they can with each patient. To all my volunteers, I thank them from the bottom of my heart for the way they dedicate their time and their dog to this worthy cause.

## **Wellington : Margaret Ranum**

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I'm sure visiting members will have had their own highlights, the connection moments that are the what and why of Canine Friends, but I can only give you a few notes on group visits and out of the ordinary activities.

**Wellington Free Ambulance:** In the weeks following the Mosque attacks, members visited Emergency Call Centre staff over the several days that it took to cover all shifts. These were very special workplace visits.

**Lotto Shoot:** Members taking part in the filming of the Canine Friends Lotto advertisement were given insight into the long and sometime tiresome work involved in putting together a 1 minute clip.

**Mental Health:** In 2019 we started weekly visits to the Wellington Hospital Mental Health Unit. These are tremendously rewarding visits - the genuine appreciation of patients is evident.