

Liaison Officer Updates AGM 2023

Auckland : Rachel Butler (LO, Group Visits), Kim Greubner (Placements)

2022-2023 has been a time of recovery for Auckland, getting our existing volunteers going again at their facilities and accepting new applications. Happy to say, this has now been achieved and I can categorically say we are up-and-running pre-Covid if not better!



As at 21 May 2023, we have approximately 93 active members and 23 non-visiting supportive members. Our Auckland Hospitals have now resumed our dog volunteers back to the wards and group visiting requests are through the roof!

This year's Founder's Day has also been a resounding success with the appointment of five "Area Coordinators" for the Auckland Districts. Each AC has organised their own social day during May in the areas they live and the response for attendance this year has been very encouraging indeed despite the crazy weather we have been experiencing. Thanks must go to the committee in assisting with the costs involved in holding this very special social event in memory of Eileen Curry.

Finally, a huge THANK YOU to my very hard-working Placements Officer, Kim Greubner, without whom Auckland would not run as well as it does.

A few pictures from Auckland below showing the love that our furry volunteers give now and into the future, including my own Lucas (right/bottom) which I had to say goodbye to this year. RIP my wonderful boy.

Christchurch : Debbie Rule

A quick summary:

- We are up to date with our assessments! And we have now advertised for specific areas.
- Shannon and I have met up and organised two events to celebrate Founders Day in May.
- Canterbury has now been 'carved up' into more manageable areas. This is to localise events and support members to network with other members. I am still the overall Liaison Officer as well as looking after Christchurch Central and North Canterbury. Shannon, as the Events Manager, will still encourage participation from all areas of Canterbury.
- Communication is improving so hopefully we won't have anyone falling through the gaps and getting missed.
- I asked members via email and Facebook, who wanted to share their details with other members in their areas as a way of getting together. I only had a 'yes' response from 9 members, so think that maybe people are mostly okay the way they are. Hopefully, the Area Managers will pick up the socialising after Founders Day celebrations have been had. I will send out an email as a reminder.
- I would like to say a special mention to Leanne Gibson for all her help. She is my 'go to' person and I so appreciate everything she does for us.

Photo:

Loving seeing the difference a pat of a dog can make to someone's day. So proud of how Blake is handling the Oncology ward....and how much I have learnt about him through doing this Canine Friends work. Sarah Chisnall

That's all from me this month. Keep warm!!



Kapiti : Lynley Evans

For nearly two years I've reported that things seemed to be getting back to normal under the Covid pandemic response. Another year and I think that we are still in this 'getting back' phase.

Kapiti's numbers are starting to build up again and it's been lovely to welcome some new members. All our rest homes, bar one, are up and running again (but still shutting down periodically because of Covid infections). Feedback is that the visits are going smoothly. Recently we have had a request from a new rest home and arrangements are being made for a dog and person to visit. We have also had a number of social events throughout the year.

A big thanks to our Executive members for their hard work and informative messages that not only make our job easier but also grow our understanding of how our organization fits together.

Photo 1: Our last group event was a walk through QE2 park from Raumati South, back along the beach, and then a lovely coffee in the small village.

Photo 2: Our newest dog Lexi was just beautiful on her very first visit. She calmly walked up to

a gentleman who appeared indifferent to us entering the room. She went very close, turned herself around, sat right at his feet and snuggled into his legs. His whole demeanor changed, and a smile broke out on his face. He then started to chat while gently patting Lexi. It was lovely to see and brought tears to our eyes (including the care worker).



Manawatu : Ann Evans & Kaye Harkness

One of our major events during the year has been being able to hold our Christmas Party in a resthome environment and share this event with those who mean so much to our organization – the staff and residents of one of our many resthomes.

It was held on Saturday 26 November. When the manager at Bupa Riverstone in Palmerston North was approached with the idea they were so excited and bent over backwards to help, offering us their meeting room supplying cups, coffee, tea, water etc for us and what could be more perfect than it opened out onto a grassy garden area. When we arrived, the room was all decorated for us as well. We created a very festive afternoon for all with added emphasis on our wonderful dogs which included lots of fun with games for our 25 dogs who came along during the day, including everything from racing through the tunnels to food games, creating a paper inspired dog and finishing with a more subdued doggy pass the parcel game.



Some of our members in Christmas dressup

The dogs then all had a puppachino for their efforts before producing an amazing Christmas dog dress-up competition which was judged by 3 of the delighted residents so everyone had to parade in front of them with some gaining an extra vote with a pat and cuddle included as they past by. There were dogs in striped pj's, elf costumes, santa costumes, dresses, Santa ears, lots of tinsel and jingle, quite a festive sight to all. Lunch was a shared banquet which was followed by all dogs receiving a Christmas parcel which they came and picked for themselves.

The residents and the staff loved the occasion with many joining in with us while others filled the window spots to watch the fun event. The manager told us they loved us so much that we are definitely invited back to use the room and grounds anytime, and she had had such excellent feedback from her staff and residents for the party. The owners with their dogs then spread further Christmas cheer by visiting the rooms, just to add that special treat to end the afternoon.

Nelson : Margaret Scaife

In Nelson, we have 11 visiting members and 4 non-visiting members, after having two more new members assessed recently.

It was devastating to lose my own beloved Chummy to a sudden, undiagnosable brain disease. I am continuing as Liaison Officer/ Assessor unless there is another applicant for this position. Thank you all for your support.

Taranaki : Chris Taylor

Being a brand-new Liaison Officer for the beautiful Taranaki region, I haven't yet got any team photos / news to share but watch this space for more to come as a group meeting is in the planning.

I am honoured to be part of this wonderful group of people, what we all give to others on site visits is magical, watching a smile light up a weary or vacant face certainly fills your heart to the brim.

In place of a team photo for now, a capture of my three darling spaniel boys, each one a super softie heart who love to share their company with those they meet.

Warmest regards from the Taranaki Team.



Tauranga : Anna Briffa

With changes to membership and renewals I recently advertised on our local Facebook page and had a good response. As a result, I have assessed and placed many new volunteers in the last few months.

We are looking forward to our first group event of the year at the University campus early June. We will be giving the students some relief from their workload during exam time. Here is a photo of our last University visit.



Wellington : Kim Riwai

As a new Liaison Officer, I am pleased to report on the following activities I am currently working on: Founders Day with Jan McKenzie, tentatively booked 24 June 2023 for both Porirua and Wellington City regions.

Establishing a calendar of group events such as Victoria and Massey University visits.

A quarterly newsletter to the Wellington city region. This was created to bring together the volunteers as some feedback received has noted the isolation when they complete visits but don't have much or any contact with other volunteers in the region,

Placements requests for placements include:

- Massey University for student sessions in May, August and October,
- Massey University for regular sessions every Wednesday,
- Victoria University for student sessions and the next Paws N Relax event,
- Metlifecare Karori for a volunteer every Monday,
- Village in the park
- Wellington City Library reading to kids and Kilbirnie, Karori and Johnsonville.
- Wellington Airport discussions have started for possibly visits to departure spaces to help those with anxiety of travelling or the busy spaces that airports can be.

Some of the above are either previous placements who have stopped due to COVID or other

reasons and are now wanting to restart volunteer visits.

Volunteer photos

Photos submitted by volunteer with permission at VIC University Paws n Relax session April 2023.



Whitby-Johnsonville : Jan McKenzie

I feel that the region is still suffering from some of the after-effects of the Covid chaos which is coming right but it is obvious that people have been doing a lot of re-thinking of their priorities. Plus, with a very good visitor moving to the Wellington region, and still more orthopaedic issues – as soon as one comes back, another drops off, and having been there, I get that! So, together with the overseas trips, some quite extended, there's a bit of juggling going on.

However, we are boxing on and in the last week, I have had a catch up with one long term member who has indicated a willingness to return to visiting after having to take some time off to deal with other issues; and another member can fit into Churtonleigh Rest Home after the vacancy that came up there.

Another positive is that one of our number, John Mcguigan had a lovely letter of appreciation from someone he and Arlo visit at Te Whare Matiarangi Mental Health Ward.

To Quote "I want to let you guys know that your guy's presence is much needed here. Seeing Arlo brightens my day, makes me believe you guys have helped many before me and the work you do as a dynamic duo can bring a smile to even the most jaded of us. Once again thank you so much."

John said, to get that letter, makes it all worthwhile.

I am in discussion with Kim, the Wellington Liaison Officer, re holding a combined Founder's Day morning tea with dog activities at Titahi Bay Canine Obedience Club. However, because I am fully booked up weekends between now and nearly the end of June, I am not available to do anything



until 24th June. We will, as usual, invite Kapiti and Hutt regions. I will also be encouraging those who can, in my group, to attend the Kapiti walk and morning tea.

Have a good month, everyone.