



ALZHEIMERS TAURANGA NEWSLETTER

UnSung Heroes

Waihi Beach Op Shop – Giving Back with Heart

Tucked away in the vibrant heart of Waihi Beach, a small but mighty team of volunteers is making a big impact – not just through secondhand treasures, but through generosity, kindness, and community spirit. For the past 25 years, the Waihi Beach Op Shop has been a beloved fixture proudly nestled in the village, its story woven into the history of the beachside town itself.

This isn't just any op shop. Known for their great prices, friendly faces, and loyal local customers, the team at Waihi Beach Op Shop have built something truly special – a supportive, connected hub that gives back in meaningful ways. We're incredibly honoured to be their chosen charity, a decision that stems from personal stories and deep community ties.



As they shared with us,

“Our husbands, partners, and friends all know someone who’s been affected by dementia. Supporting Alzheimers Tauranga just felt like the right thing to do – it’s a worthy cause close to our hearts.”

Their generous support helps us continue our work across the region, and the goodwill doesn't stop there. Once a week, on a rotating day (either a Tuesday, Thursday or Saturday), proceeds from purchases go directly to Alzheimers Tauranga – and when shoppers find this out, many choose to round up or donate their change in support. It's an uplifting example of what can happen when a community rallies behind a cause.

Behind the scenes, their dedicated volunteers are constantly restocking, cleaning, helping customers, and sharing smiles. Two other local shops assist them with day-to-day needs, and Harcourts lends a hand with printed materials – a true example of “locals helping locals.” And while the volunteers work hard, it's clear their hearts are full:

“We love meeting people, chatting with them, and seeing their gratitude – especially the orchard workers. It really lifts us up.”

Continued.....



When asked what they'd say to someone thinking of volunteering, their answer was enthusiastic: ***“Go for it! You'll meet new people, feel good, and get personal satisfaction from giving back. The rewards are amazing.”***

From all of us at Alzheimers Tauranga — thank you. Your compassion, hard work, and community spirit are deeply appreciated. To every volunteer, supporter, and shopper at Waihi Beach Op Shop: you're helping make a difference, one recycled treasure at a time.



Understanding and Managing Repetition in Dementia

Repetitive speech or actions are common in individuals with dementia. While it may seem frustrating or puzzling for caregivers, understanding the reasons behind repetition can provide insight into the person's emotions and unmet needs.

Why Does Repetition Happen?

Repetition can be a sign of:

- Anxiety or uncertainty: The person may be seeking reassurance.
- Boredom: They may need engagement or stimulation.
- Memory loss: Forgetting they already asked the question.
- Emotional distress: A way to express fears or unmet needs.

Using the VERA Approach

The VERA (Validate, Emotion, Reassure, Activity) approach is an effective method for managing repetition with empathy.

1. Validate: Acknowledge what the person is saying.
2. Emotion: Identify the underlying feeling.
3. Reassure: Provide comfort.
4. Activity: Redirect attention.



A Huge Thank You To Our Amazing Volunteers!

At Alzheimers Tauranga, it takes a whole team — staff, volunteers, and supporters — working together to make a real difference. Volunteers are a huge part of that story, and we want to take a moment to celebrate just how special they are for International Volunteer week, June 15th - 21st.

Through their kindness, energy, and generosity, our volunteers help create a welcoming, supportive space for people living with dementia and their families. And the feedback we receive says it all:

"Thanks to the volunteers, we can attend meetings closer to home, making what can be a tough journey a little bit easier."

"Volunteers have enriched my sister's life — she's no longer lonely, and she's happy and grateful."

"The smiles, good humour, and endless patience shown by the volunteers are such a gift every second Monday morning."

"When I drop my Mum off at the social group, I often can't tell who the paid staff are and who the volunteers are — everyone is just so friendly and welcoming."

Families also spoke about the respect, care, and professionalism they experience when interacting with our navigators and the whole Alzheimers Tauranga team:

"The support we've received has been outstanding — not just helpful, but genuinely respectful of the person living with dementia."

Our volunteers bring light, laughter, and compassion to every moment they share — and it means the world to the people we support.

Your time, your care, and your wonderful spirit make our community stronger. You are truly appreciated — today, and every day!

From all of us at Alzheimers Tauranga, thank you for your incredible dedication.
We are proud to have you as part of our team



Message from our General Manager

Welcome to our Winter edition. This issue is a real bumper one with a heap of informative content. We are showcasing one of the organisations that regularly contribute a significant donation to our service, The Waihi Beach Op shop, highlighting the great ongoing impact of our volunteers, diving into some of the stories behind our artful mid exhibition and also sharing some educational information about dementia. If you need assistance, don't hesitate to contact Alzheimers Tauranga, your Dementia Navigator or any of the resources listed in this newsletter.

This issue also comes at a very special time - International Volunteer Week (June June 15th - 21st). On behalf of myself, our team of staff and I'm sure from our clients and their whanau, we would like to sincerely thank our volunteers for their time and dedication to our cause - without them, our service would look very different.

With so many new referrals each month, it is more important than ever that we spread the awareness and raise valuable funds for our support services. We Just had our dedicated volunteers out in force at various venues across Tauranga and the Western BOP for our May appeal which was once again very well supported with around \$10,000 raised which will all be used directly to provide services in our area ,and our attention now turns to planning for the September appeal..

Our unique and meaningful Artful Mind Exhibition is returning this year where a local artist is paired with someone on the dementia journey to have their story told in artform. It's not too late to be a part of this special project, contact your Navigator or Steph - our Volunteer Coordinator and Artful Mind Exhibition Coordinator to sign up .

Education Opportunities

June

- *About Dementia*
 - Monday 9th Tauranga 1.30 - 3pm
- *Understanding Changed Behaviour*
 - Wednesday 25th Tauranga 1.30 - 4pm

July

- *Understanding Changed Behaviour*
 - Friday 11th Tauranga 10.30 - 1pm
- *About Dementia*
 - Wed 16th Tauranga 10 - 11.30am
 - Thur 31stTauranga 11.30am - 1pm

August

- *About Dementia*
 - Thur 14th Tauranga 10 - 11.30am

Please contact your navigator if you would like to attend any of these sessions



Bringing Stories to Life Through Art:

A Conversation with Dr. Bronwyn Copeland

At the heart of our community is a growing movement that's using art to shine a light on the stories of those living with dementia—stories that are deeply human, rich in history, and worthy of being seen. We recently sat down with Dr. Bronwyn Copeland, a geriatric psychiatrist and artist, to learn about a beautiful initiative that brings together artists and people living with dementia in a partnership of creativity and connection.

A Dual Calling: Psychiatry and Art

Dr. Bronwyn Copeland has been working as a geriatric psychiatrist with the Mental Health Services for Older People at Tauranga Hospital since 2009. She describes it as a privilege to walk alongside patients and their families through the dementia journey. Despite the challenges of limited resources and intermittent care, she finds immense meaning in her work, supported by a dedicated team of compassionate professionals.

Outside of the hospital, Dr. Bronwyn Copeland is a devoted wife, mother of two teenage daughters, and an artist whose creative spirit has been nurtured since childhood. "Drawing and creativity are part of my identity," she says, a gift passed down from her late mother. In recent years, she's found more time to invest in her artistic practice—especially after receiving an art scholarship that required her to dedicate 17 hours a week to her craft.

The Spark Behind the Project

The idea to pair people living with dementia with artists came from a simple yet powerful place: connection. "I get great joy from working alongside someone and creating things together," she explains.

By pairing an artist with a person whose memories may be slipping away, the project aims to preserve stories, emotions, and identities through visual expression.

"Art allows one to escape losses for a short period and capture meaning and beauty from the past," she says. Not only does it help break down the stigma around dementia, but it also provides a joyful, mindful space for creativity and connection.

From Conversation to Creation

Each artist-client partnership is as unique as the individual. Some clients prefer to share their stories while the artist creates the piece on their behalf. Others are excited to pick up a brush and participate in the creative process. Dr. Bronwyn Copeland shares how she begins with a simple conversation—getting to know the client and their loved ones, listening to their life stories, and finding visual elements that represent their experiences.

For those who choose to collaborate, the process becomes a shared journey of exploration. "We had such fun creating something meaningful and beautiful," she recalls. Even those who simply told their story were moved when they saw the final artwork: a heartfelt visual tribute to their life and memories.

**Contact your Navigator
or Steph to register**

volunteers.tauranga@alzheimers.org.nz



Why Art Matters

For people with dementia, verbal communication can become difficult, but art offers another language—one of colour, line, tone, and emotion. Long-term memories often remain accessible, and creating art around these memories can bring comfort, joy, and a renewed sense of self.

"Art has the ability to make something beautiful out of something difficult," says Dr. Bronwyn Copeland. "It transcends traditional communication and breaks down barriers."

Beyond the finished piece, the experience offers therapeutic benefits: mental stimulation, mindfulness, a sense of purpose, and often the discovery of a hidden creative spark.

An Open Invitation

To those unsure about participating, Dr. Bronwyn Copeland offers gentle encouragement: "One has nothing to lose by being involved—only benefit and joy to be gained." And to those who think they don't have a story worth telling? "Everyone has a story. There is beauty in every person's journey."

A Project With Heart

For Dr. Bronwyn Copeland, the most meaningful part of this project is the way it gives art true purpose. It's about legacy, dignity, and creating beauty that lasts even as memories fade.

"Art should be available to everyone," she says. "It has the power to provide respite from life's challenges, to leave a legacy for loved ones, and to capture moments in time."

We are so grateful to Dr. Bronwyn Copeland for sharing her passion and vision. If you or your loved one would like to be part of this special project, we warmly invite you to reach out. Your story matters—and we'd love to help bring it to life.

A Brush Remembers

Stephanie Harlan

The canvas waits, the colours blend,
As fading thoughts begin to mend.
Though days dissolve in memory's haze,
The hand recalls in silent ways.

A bloom of red, a storm of blue—
Each stroke a memory breaking through.
When words fall silent, lost to air,
The paint still speaks of love and care.

Hands that tremble still can tell
The stories that the heart knows well.
Though thoughts may fade and edges blur,
The canvas keeps what once was sure.

Not all we carry forms in speech—
Yet paint can touch what words can't reach.
Of sorrow, hope, and moments missed,
Of every hug, of every kiss.

Though time may blur what once was clear,
Creation brings the lost ones near.
And in each mark, both wild and true,
The heart remembers me and you.



ARTFUL MIND EXHIBITION

Have your story told by an artist

Everyone has a story to tell, this is a unique opportunity to tell yours to an artist and have it interpreted in art form.

Why should I sign up?

Beyond the finished piece that you are able to share with family and friends, the experience offers therapeutic benefits: mental stimulation, mindfulness, a sense of purpose, and often the discovery of a hidden creative spark. Not only does it help break down the stigma around dementia, but it also provides a joyful, mindful space for creativity and connection.

Can I help create the piece? Do I have to help create the piece?

You can either tell your story to the artist and they will go away and create a piece of artwork, or you could work with the artist and create something together over multiple sessions.

Does the story have to be about my dementia journey?

There is more to your life story than your current journey, you can tell any part of your life story that you like.

I find it hard to communicate, can I still participate?

You absolutely can! Between yourself, your carer, your photo albums, sentimental items that you have held onto, your artist will be able to put your story together in a meaningful way.

What happens to the artwork after the Exhibition?

The artist is donating their time and skills and their finished work to you - you can either choose to sell the artwork at the exhibition with the funds raised going to Alzheimers services, or you can choose to keep the artwork.

Contact your Navigator or Steph to register
volunteers.tauranga@alzheimers.org.nz





Let's Talk About The Hard Stuff

Because some things are hard to talk about – but we should anyway

Gaylene Delaney, Dementia Navigator, Registered Nurse

ADVANCED CARE PLANNING

What is an advanced care plan?

An advance care plan is a way of letting people know what matters to you if you ever become seriously ill and are unable to make decisions for yourself. You might not need it, but if you do, it is really helpful to have.

Why do we all need an Advance Care Plan?

Because life is unpredictable! It is not just for older people or those who are sick. Accidents and sudden illness can happen to anyone at any time. Having a plan means your voice is heard, your family will not have to guess or make tough decisions without knowing what you would want. Also, your care can truly reflect who you are.

What does it include?

- What kind of care do you want, or do you not want
- Where would you prefer to be etc...
- Who do you want to make decisions on your behalf

How do I start?

- Reflect – What matters most to me? What is quality of life to me?
- Start talking with family, close friends, your GP, and an end-of-life doula.
- Start writing – document your wishes and thoughts
- Share – Who needs to know where to find your plan? Share with GP. Have it added to your hospital file.

When to review?

As we progress through life, it is not unusual for our choices and preferences to change. I recommend reviewing your advanced care plan yearly on your birthday, as a birthday present to yourself.

Bottom line:

Advance care planning is for anyone, at any age. Planning ahead is one of the kindest things you can do for yourself and the people you love.

Helpful Resources:

We have an Advanced Care Plan resource available at our office - please ask at reception.

www.myacp.org.nz includes an online form or where to request hard copies.

[Love is not enough](#) YouTube video - Advanced care planning



TECH CHAT

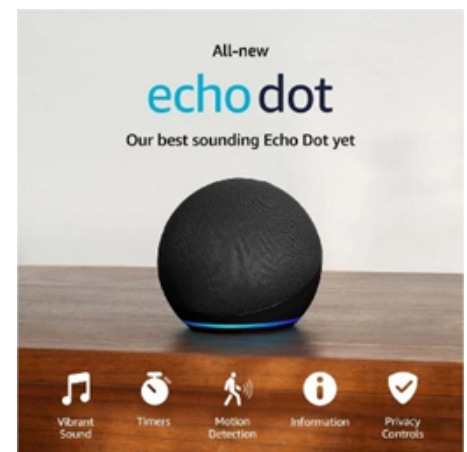
Jo Leckenby, Dementia Navigator, Occupational Therapist

Assistive technology can play a crucial role in supporting people living with dementia. For the next few newsletters, we are going to be showcasing a few products that are on the market that people have used successfully to support independence and improve safety.

Amazon Echo - Alexa

Alexa is Amazon's artificial intelligence personal assistant. It is available on compatible devices such as the Echo Dot. Some of the most common benefits of using Alexa devices include:

- Reminders and alarms: By setting alarms and reminders throughout the day, you can stay on top of important schedules and appointments. It can also provide regular recurring reminders for chores, daily tasks such as mealtimes, taking medications and grooming.
- Lists: Alexa can create shopping lists via voice commands that you can then view on a smartphone while shopping.
- Entertainment uses: You can listen to music and audiobooks.
- Hands-free functionality: Because Amazon Alexa can be used entirely through voice command, people with physical and visual impairments can still use many of its benefits.
- Other features: Alexa can also provide assistance with cognitive tasks, such as remembering words, helping with spelling, checking facts, identifying the current weather conditions or listening to the news.



Smart Cameras and Doorbells

Smart home cameras can be a valuable tool for monitoring the well-being of someone when they are home alone as well as general home security. Some popular features include:

- Two-way audio so you can speak to the person, and they can speak back to you.
- Easy to use Apps so that they can be monitored by family anywhere in the world.
- Motion detection. Alerts can be set for when motion is detected in certain areas of the house.
- Some devices have the ability to record video so you can look back at it to review things that have happened.
- Smart doorbells alert when someone is at the door, a package is delivered, or can record when someone has arrived or left the house.





TECH CHAT continued.....

Things to note:

- Most of these devices require Wi-Fi in the home and someone to have access to a Smart Phone for set up and monitoring.
- It is important to consider people's privacy and their consent to being filmed/recorded. It is recommended that you inform people entering the house that there are cameras and what their purpose is i.e. safety/security.
- These products and more Smart Home solutions can be found at Noel Leeming, PB Tech, Mitre10 or Bunnings.
- If you have any questions about how Smart technology could work for you, please contact your Navigator.

Understanding and Managing Disorientation in Dementia

Helping our loved ones feel safe and supported

Disorientation is a common and often distressing symptom of dementia. It may include confusion about time, place, or even familiar people. For someone living with dementia, this can feel frightening and overwhelming — but with patience and the right support, we can help ease that experience.

What does disorientation look like?

A person may forget where they are, become unsure of what day or year it is, or not recognise their surroundings. They might feel lost in their own home or believe they need to “go home” even when they are already there.

Practical ways to help:

- Stay calm and reassuring. A gentle tone can help de-escalate anxiety. Correcting or arguing often increases confusion.
- Create a sense of familiarity. Personal items, photos, and consistent routines offer comfort and orientation.
- Use visual cues. Signs, labels, calendars, and clocks can help provide helpful context, especially in key places like the bathroom or kitchen.
- Gently redirect. If someone insists they need to go somewhere, try engaging them in a meaningful activity or suggesting a walk together.
- Limit environmental stressors. Too much noise, clutter, or unfamiliar environments can increase disorientation.



We thank the following for their ongoing support



PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK!

Did you know that we are a charity? Only a small proportion of our costs are met by contracts and we work hard to fundraise the rest locally. Please consider the ways you may be able to support us to continue to provide our services to everyone who needs help dealing with dementia.

I/We would like to support people in my local community by:

- ☐ Becoming a member - membership subscription is \$40 per year ☐ Life membership \$200
- ☐ With a gift of ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other
- ☐ By giving regularly and/or making a bequest (*please send me further information*)

Please charge my



VISA



Mastercard

Card number _____

Expiry _____ / _____ CVC _____ Signature of card holder _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Gifts \$5 and over are tax deductible.

For direct credit and/or automatic payment, Alzheimers Tauranga - WBOP bank details are:
Westpac, Tauranga Centre 03-0435-0470677-00. Use your name as a reference.



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