

Cycling Without Age Napier takes Triobike to Taradale Masonic Rest Home

Hawkes Bay Today

By Brenda Vowden 16 Jun, 2022 12:30 PM 5 minutes to read



Elizabeth Barrett gets ridden around Taradale Masonic Rest Home by Alan White in the new triobike.
Photo / Warren Buckland

Hopping on a bike and feeling the wind in your hair is something many of us take for granted. But for some in our community, that isn't the case.

Cycling Without Age (CWA) Napier is a recently formed registered charitable trust which has imported an electric triobike from Copenhagen. Trustees Alan White and Liz Barrett spent a few months fundraising the \$25,000 needed for the bike. A ride on a triobike gives senior citizens the chance to get back on a bike.

"We feel honoured to be given the privilege to give our Napier senior citizens the right to rediscover the joy of cycling and reconnecting with nature and sharing their stories as we slowly ride on their outings," Alan says.

CWA began in Copenhagen where social entrepreneur Ole Kassow founded the nonprofit organisation in 2012. There are now 2700 chapters of CWA worldwide.

Alan and Liz are in the process of attracting potential pilots, who will volunteer about two hours a month to take passengers out for a ride.

"Pilots get as much, if not more, from the simple gift of giving their time to bring a bit of joy to those who have contributed so much to their country. We want to bring CWA into their lives and help make a difference. Older adults and those experiencing lonely journeys will all have interesting stories to tell."

Alan says training a pilot depends on their starting point.

"We are ideally looking for people who are cyclists already and have ridden an e-bike."

All pilots will be fully trained, require police clearance and be totally familiar with the bike before being authorised to carry passengers. All routes will be strictly adhered to without deviation and rides will be monitored. Slow will be the only permissible speed, Alan says.

"Our challenge is to give stewardship of these people. It's not an ad-hoc service. We don't just go out and drive around on an unplanned route. It's very important to build this up correctly and in a safe manner."

Telling their stories is a major part of the ride.

"We slow things down so people can smell the roses and share their stories. Storytelling is about listening. We're trying to draw things out."

He says the pilot will complete a pilot's log which will include the pilot and passenger's names, contact details, route being taken, weather and a short bike safety checklist. All will be done with the passenger's consent and may include any snippets of interest or anecdotes that have been shared on the ride.

"This may later be used on Facebook or other media. Passenger consent will always be gained — their privacy is a priority. Pilots will also ensure on an initial ride a number of photos are taken so the passenger has a memento of their ride."

He says part of their training is to understand that a passenger might not be in the best of health so they have to handle the bike plus anticipate any bumps and talk to the passenger so there's no surprises.

Alan took the shiny new rickshaw style bike to the Taradale Masonic Rest Home and Hospital last week to offer residents a familiarisation ride around the grounds.

"I wanted to see if they might be interested in venturing further afield. Nine residents lined up for the short ride in brisk morning temperatures, all wrapped up in our CWA warm duffel blanket." Alan says they all had a ball.

"Unfortunately their smiles were hidden behind face masks but that didn't suppress the laughter, waves and conversation in the short rides that we took."

Clinical services manager Katrina Miller said one of the residents was still grinning from ear to ear and talking about her experience all morning.

"We really appreciated this morning and all the effort that went into making this possible. It was a fun and enjoyable outing and it truly lifted my day. It was enjoyed by all."

Alan and Liz are now on the lookout for any agency supporting people who live isolated from their community or anyone interested in being a pilot, trainer, marshal, or have media or bike mechanic skills.

"We also hope to get a second triobike soon so all donations towards this are very welcome. If we can keep the bike busy two or three days a week, it's time to order another. I would love to hear from you, explore opportunities for partnership and answer any questions you have."

■ Contact Alan on 0274 302 702 or email CWA.Napiernz@gmail.com