



# Mind | Matters 24

Exercise and Dementia Edition • Issue 24 • February 2019

## Let's get physical!

We all know the major benefits of exercise. Whether improved strength, fitness and endurance, or better cardiovascular health, exercise is good for all of us – and especially for people living with dementia.

So why is exercise so important for those with dementia?

- Exercise can improve your memory and slow down cognitive decline
- It improves your heart health
- Maintaining stronger muscles and joints can help you maintain independence for longer
- It can improve self-esteem and mood
- It reduces your risk of osteoporosis
- Exercising with others can provide much needed socialisation
- So how can you incorporate physical activity into your routine?

**Walking** is one of the easiest ways to raise the heart rate and it's free! Going for walks regularly provides an outlet for the restless urge to wander that is common of those living with dementia. Combining the walk with a daily activity such as going to the shops, walking the dog or visiting a friend is a useful way of incorporating exercise into your regular routine. Why not join one of our Dementia Auckland walking groups as a way of getting exercise and being social at the same time?

Attending **aerobics or dance classes** together can be extremely beneficial to the social world of someone living



with dementia, especially when they're designed specifically for people with dementia (read about one of our fabulous dancing groups later in Mind Matters!) Any exercise alongside a group provides feelings of camaraderie and fun while also releasing the positive endorphins we all need. Alternatively, following along to a workout video from home is a simple way to incorporate exercise for those less comfortable exercising with others.

Regular exercise is not just hugely beneficial to physical health, but also benefits brain activity and can decrease the chances of developing dementia. Studies have shown that

physical activity helps your brain by not only keeping the blood flowing but also by increasing chemicals that protect the brain. It can keep your thinking and reasoning skills sharper, and improve judgment, memory, and cognitive function.

Whether it's going for a stroll in the park or attending an aerobics class at the gym, even a little bit of exercise can go a long way for not only those living with dementia but everyone else too. This summer, encourage your loved ones to get active and add some element of fitness into their daily routine. 

# “There’s no dementia when you’re dancing”

All of our socialisation groups bring joy to the lives of people with dementia, but perhaps none more so than our dancing group which meets at Pakuranga Leisure Centre every Wednesday.

From waltz to disco, Andrews Sisters to Lionel Richie, everyone can bring music and dance from their own cultures and memories to the table – making it one of the most diverse playlists you’ll ever hear! YMCA gets everyone dancing along in sync, while classics like My Girl get the group singing along as well.

## “When I’m here, I’m free” – Marlene

“I think it’s wonderful,” shares Amrita, who has younger onset dementia and attends the group with husband Martin. “It makes you feel special, feel loved.”



Martin agrees, explaining, “Everybody just does what they want to do, everybody’s relaxed.”

## “My favourite dance is on two feet – that’s very important!” – Terry

For some of the couples who come along, the classes bring back special



times together – both Carolyn and Paul and Doreen and Jeff met at dances in their younger years and sometimes a song is enough to bring back many of those memories again.

## “Sometimes you have a lightbulb moment” – Amrita

“He tried half the night to get a dance with me and I kept getting up with



others,” laughs Doreen. “It’s lucky he persisted!”

For all the members of the group though, what makes it so special is the ability to come together and simply be themselves.

“For me, I’ve loved music all my life,” explains Marlene. “I like to give myself the chance of a life that I love – that’s what I get here.” Lisa agrees, sharing, “There’s no dementia when you’re dancing.” 🌈

# 23 laps and counting: Malcolm Chamberlin's incredible record

Have you ever taken part in the ASB Auckland Marathon? Maybe you have. Have you done it 23 times? Probably not. That's because 23 entries is the record held by one of our volunteers (and all-around superhuman) Malcolm Chamberlin, who represented us in his 23rd run in the iconic ASB Auckland Marathon, fundraising and raising awareness for Dementia Auckland.

The ASB Auckland Marathon is an annual event with over 15,000 runners participating in 2018, taking runners from Devonport, over the Harbour Bridge all the way to Saint Heliers and finishing at Victoria Park. At 42km, completing the marathon is no small feat and completing it 23 times is exhausting to even think about. But Malcolm's a veteran marathon runner and has been a dedicated Dementia Auckland volunteer since way back.

Dementia Auckland was a huge help to Malcolm and his wife of over 40 years Susan when her mother developed dementia. Since then, the pair have been out there supporting us in any way they can. They know how important it is to have a solid support system behind you to help alleviate some of the challenges, while sharing experiences of caring for a loved one with dementia. Together they hosted get-togethers at their home where people with dementia and their carers could come along, have a cup of tea, and support each other.

As active volunteers, Susan will "drag" Malcolm along to take part in the annual Countdown Collection raising money that goes towards providing vital services and education to the estimated 18,000 Aucklanders living with dementia and their carers. But with his passion for running marathons, Malcolm thought that representing Dementia Auckland in the ASB Auckland Marathon "would



be far more fun than standing outside Countdown holding out the buckets for donations".

Malcolm has always been keen on sport. "It either teaches you how to lose, or it shows you that you can win," he says. But he didn't get into running until later in life, after his daughter told him he needed to be doing something for himself. He took on his first marathon when he was challenged on a bet, boldly claiming he could outrun his friend's marathon time. Everyone told him he couldn't do it but he was committed and has learned that "if you believe you can do it, you can.... It's always possible".

Since then, he has competed in over 33 full marathons all over New Zealand, Australia, and the Cook Islands and has enjoyed the camaraderie of the many fellow runners he has met along the way. "It's great being around positive people, all of a similar age, who are out there wearing their different shirts and representing their clubs and organisations – giving the young participants a run for their money."

Regular exercise is hugely beneficial to our brain activity and can decrease the chances of developing dementia. Studies show that physical activity helps your brain not only by keeping the blood flowing but also by increasing chemicals that protect the brain. It can keep your thinking and reasoning skills sharper, as well as improve judgment, memory and cognitive function. Malcolm encourages anyone and everyone to give it a go, saying, "You learn so much about yourself when you do a marathon."

If you're up for a challenge and want to support a great cause, participating in a half or full marathon is an amazing way to get behind Dementia Auckland. And if you're keen to take part in the 2019 ASB Auckland Marathon, look out for racer number 26 and take on Malcolm Chamberlin – the marathon veteran who is sure to be at the start line ready for his 24th lap over the Harbour Bridge. 🏃

# Dust off your sneakers for the Walk for Dementia



Do your stretches, get your walkers on and join us at the starting line this March to support people living with dementia.

On the 24th of March, we are holding our annual Walk for Dementia fundraiser. We'd love to see you join us in raising awareness and funds so Dementia Auckland can continue to provide our much needed free support services.

Exercise is so important to keeping our physical health and brain activity in check, especially for people living with dementia. Why not take up this opportunity to get inspired and inspire

others to get out there and keep moving?

Walk for Dementia is a non-competitive 5km walk starting at Mission Bay, taking walkers to St Heliers and back. With a bit of training, it's achievable by most people whatever your fitness level or walking pace. Choose to stride, stroll, power walk or skip – it's up to you!

Refreshments and entertainment will



be on hand and it will be an excellent opportunity to enjoy the fresh air in autumn with friends and family, all in the name of a great cause. 🌿

**Signing up is free so register with your family and friends now at [www.everydayhero.co.nz/event/WalkforDementia2019](http://www.everydayhero.co.nz/event/WalkforDementia2019)**

## A successful day on the green

We would like to say a huge THANK YOU to everyone involved in the annual Countdown Charity Golf Day, held this year on Friday 15th February.

It was a great day out for all involved and we could not have done it without the amazing support we get from Parnell Rotary Club and Progressive Enterprises. We so appreciate their extensive organising efforts and commitment to helping Dementia Auckland raise the funds needed to continue providing our services for free.

The money raised goes towards helping provide socialisation services, carer education, and Key Worker support for many of the estimated 18,000 Aucklanders living with dementia. 🌿



# The Masterclasses Series

Every time Maria or Rhonda (Educators for Dementia Auckland) finish a 4-week Carer Education Programme, the feedback from carers is that they want more! More time, more information, more questions answered.

So, at the beginning of 2018, we created the Masterclasses Series. Each Masterclass was a 2-hour session dedicated to one topic relevant to families living with, or supporting, someone with dementia. The sessions were held in Pt Chevalier and carers, family members, and people living with dementia attended from all over Auckland.

In 2018 we covered Dementia and Safety to Continue Driving, Practical Tips for Changing Needs, Memory Training, Sleep, Planning for Christmas and Travelling with PLWD and Understanding Depression and Anxiety. The response to these was amazing. Driving and Travelling saw between 13 and 22 people attend, while for the more general topics we

had around 32-34 attendees. Some dedicated folks came to nearly all of the sessions!

In 2019 we will be repeating some of last year's topics and introducing some new ones.

## Our programme for 2019 will be:

Date	Topic	Speakers
March 22nd	Aphasia and Communication	Jan Wanless from Aphasia Society Annabel Grant, Speech Language Therapist, Lecturer at Massey University – SLT Institute
April (date TBC)	Finances and EPOA	Speakers to be confirmed
May 17th	Hygiene and Incontinence	Janet Thackray, Continence Nurse Educator from Continence NZ
June 14th	Caring at Home for Someone with End Stage Dementia	Chris Cussens – a carer's perspective Dementia care experts Palliative care experts
July 26th	Specific Dementia – Frontal Temporal Dementia and Lewy Body Dementia	Experts in FTD and LBD
Sept 20th	Memory Training	Rhonda Preston-Jones
Oct 25th	Caring for the Carers	Speakers to be confirmed
Nov 29th	Safety to Continue Driving	Rhonda Preston-Jones

**For updates and flyers on each session closer to the time, please join our Facebook page:**  
<https://www.facebook.com/DementiaAKL>

**Do you have old issues of the New Zealand Memories Magazine lying around?**  
**Our socialisation team are kindly asking for donations of old copies.**  
**Thanks! Please contact [sarah@dementiaauckland.org.nz](mailto:sarah@dementiaauckland.org.nz) or contact 09 662 4230**

## Thank you to our Christmas elves!

A huge thank you to everyone who volunteered for us over December by wrapping gifts at LynnMall and Sylvia Park. We had an incredible 1450 shifts filled by our amazing volunteers over 24 days – a total of 2900 hours of gift wrapping! Thanks to your amazing support, we raised over \$39,051 to provide free support services for people with dementia. An incredible result, and one that will have a big impact for a long time!



# Exploring the benefits of taking up poi

Within our very own Māori culture, there is an ancient performance art currently being explored to identify its impact on the mind and body for older adults. People living with dementia, and those who care for them, are constantly seeking out new ways to improve brain activity, and poi might be the perfect activity to try.

As most Kiwis know, poi involves swinging tethered weights in rhythmic and geometric patterns, often accompanied by singing and dancing.

Dr Kate Riegle van West is an interdisciplinary researcher with a passion for play and wellbeing. She leads SpinPoi, which is a research group dedicated to improving lives through poi. Kate says, "After years of practicing poi myself, I realised how much of an impact it could have in places like rest homes and hospitals. It's just such a fun, accessible, affordable way to engage both the mind and body."

Kate conducted the first study in the world to evaluate the effects of poi on physical and cognitive function in older adults with some very interesting results, showing us why it's an art form worth taking up.



There were 79 participants aged between 60-86 years old who took two poi classes a week for four weeks and were tested across three domains: physical, cognitive and emotional. Immediately post-intervention, balance, upper limb strength, and simple attention all significantly improved.



Poi could be a great way for people living with dementia to improve cognitive function as participants reported that their brains were more alert for hours afterwards, their brains and bodies were coordinating together better, and they had improved memory.

Learning a new skill was also an enjoyable challenge for participants, giving many a sense of accomplishment afterwards. "It was challenging and I did feel myself improving in some moves which I thought I'd never be able to do," one participant commented.

Many also claimed poi was extremely calming once they had gotten the hang of it, "almost like a meditation".

"There is quite an element of peacefulness about the experience of doing poi in sync."

Poi incorporates key traits which have proven to have a positive impact on health. Physical activity, rhythm and play have all been proven to reduce the risk factors of dementia and improve functioning and quality of life. Kate says, "I think this Māori taonga has a tremendous role to play in helping keep our minds and bodies fit as we age."

If you're looking for a challenge, or a way to improve cognitive function, give poi a try and see if it works for you. You can visit [www.spinpoi.com](http://www.spinpoi.com) for some great resources around poi and health, or feel free to get in touch with Kate directly: [kate@spinpoi.com](mailto:kate@spinpoi.com) 🌸

# The relief of finding support: Andrea's story

**My sister was the one who noticed the earlier signs of dementia in Mum back in 2009. It was pretty clear that something wasn't quite right. Mum and Dad coped for a while but, in 2011, I decided it was time to move back in to the family home to help them out.**

Seeing my mum change was overwhelming. It felt like a loss in many ways. I wasn't handling it well, and it started to affect my own health. My sister was incredibly supportive and knows a lot about dementia but I got to the stage where I was quite desperate as my mum's main caregiver.

I had walked past the Dementia Auckland office in Tui Glen a couple of times before and had thought, "I must go in there and get some more information about caring for someone with dementia" but I was feeling very vulnerable and overwhelmed. Finally I mustered enough courage to see someone and met with Nicola Brenton from Dementia Auckland to start the process.

Nicola gave me all this information, and told me about the courses for carers that were available so I could be more equipped to help my mum. I was so relieved to have that support and really appreciated the encouragement she gave me, reminding me that I was not alone and there were many others out there going through the same thing.

She put us on to the walking groups and also connected me with Lynn and Maria who really encouraged me to do the carers course as well. The course was so helpful to me, and the walking group was incredibly beneficial to not only my mum but also my dad.

It was a great chance for them both to go out and interact with others and get a bit social. They'd meet the others to walk twice a week. Mum would usually forget the walk straight after but she always enjoyed herself – it was quite



amazing to see her just living in the present moment!

From going to the courses and using the resources provided by Dementia Auckland, I had a far deeper understanding of what Mum was going through. It's not about memory loss, it's about a person's holistic wellbeing. What I really got out of it was the awareness that dementia does not define a person; just because someone is living with dementia doesn't mean they aren't the same person that we love.

Mum was managing fine until around August 2017, when she started to deteriorate. First her dress sense would be a bit off, then she would forget what she had for breakfast or who had just come to visit. It became more and more apparent that she needed more support.

Now she's moved into a rest home which wasn't an easy transition at first, especially for my dad and the rest of our family. Mum has started to settle in to her new home, but it's still taking some time, and can be challenging for her in the evenings.

It's easy to lose perspective when you're in the midst of it all and you just want your mum or your loved one back as they were. But I got plenty out of

those courses, especially from hearing that others were going through the same thing. Many don't have family or support so hearing about some of the challenges other carers were facing made me feel grateful because I do have that essential support network. I really feel for those that are going through it by themselves but I hope they know that there are others thinking of them and there's support to be found. Things like day-stay, the walking groups, and the courses Dementia Auckland provide were all amazingly beneficial for both myself and Mum, helping us lead normal, fulfilling lives – or at least as normal as we possibly could! 🌸

## Support the future with your greatest gift

One of the greatest things that we can do in life is leave the world a little better than we found it. A way that you can make a difference and have a positive impact on the lives of many is by leaving a gift for Dementia Auckland, the only provider of free dementia services in Auckland, in your Will.

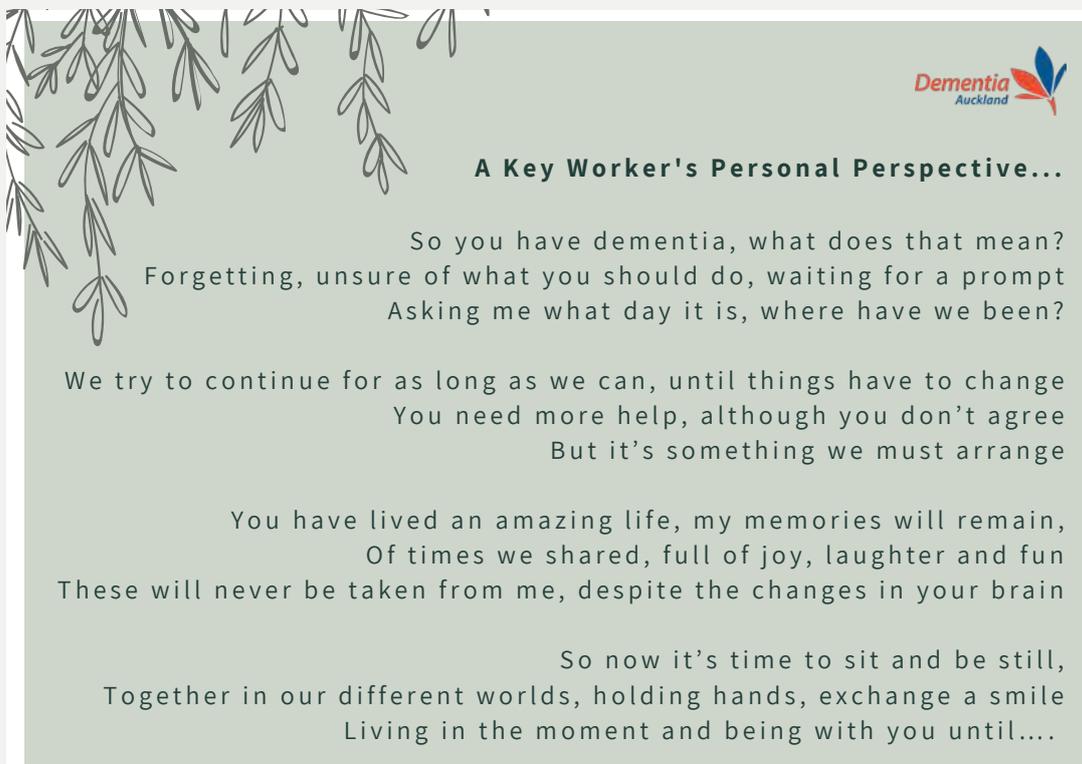
If you would like to support people in your community beyond your lifetime you can leave a gift for Dementia Auckland in your Will. For more information please contact us via phone on 09 622 4230 or email [info@dementiauckland.org.nz](mailto:info@dementiauckland.org.nz)

# Put the fun in fundraiser

Does your organisation or group like to take part in, or put on, fun events within the community? Why not turn it into a fundraising initiative to support Dementia Auckland at the same time?

Our organisation is the only provider of free support services to the estimated 18,000 people living with dementia in Auckland. As we only receive partial funding through DHB's we rely on the generosity of everyday New Zealanders.

Next time your group is getting involved in a social event, consider making it a fundraiser for Dementia Auckland to support us in our efforts to continue providing socialisation services, carer education, and Key Worker support in our community. You'll help people with dementia make the most of every moment.



**Dementia Auckland**

### A Key Worker's Personal Perspective...

So you have dementia, what does that mean?  
Forgetting, unsure of what you should do, waiting for a prompt  
Asking me what day it is, where have we been?

We try to continue for as long as we can, until things have to change  
You need more help, although you don't agree  
But it's something we must arrange

You have lived an amazing life, my memories will remain,  
Of times we shared, full of joy, laughter and fun  
These will never be taken from me, despite the changes in your brain

So now it's time to sit and be still,  
Together in our different worlds, holding hands, exchange a smile  
Living in the moment and being with you until...

Thanks to our amazing Key Worker Wendy Mawson for this beautiful poem that she wrote about her experiences with her grandmother, who had dementia.

## Thank you!

We wish to thank Alzheimers NZ for providing Dementia Auckland with some funding from September 2018 to September 2019. This funding is being provided by Alzheimers NZ from a pool of donations received in the Auckland region, thus returning donor funds to support frontline services in the region they were raised. Dementia Auckland will apply these funds to its DHB-unfunded Socialisation Service, thus this is a contribution from Alzheimers NZ to help make this programme possible.

Thank you also to Pub Charity Ltd for the grant that pays for the design and printing of this newsletter – helping us to keep in touch with you. Thank you to all our amazing volunteers, sponsors, friends, donors and funders and supporters – without you, we couldn't help nearly as many people with dementia to live well.