

Auckland Cochlear Implant Consumer Group

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2016 at Hearing Auckland (Hearing Association), 8 Vincent Ave, Remuera, Auckland.

Host/ess: Karel and Maxine.

Present: Donna, Kerry, Raewyn, Louis and Mona, Zeta and Ged, Pam, Rod and Helen McAlpine, Marian and John, Di, Caroline, Heather, Des and Gay, Stuart, Lyn, Vince, Anita and Frank.

Apologies: Maurice and Patricia (Whangamata), Raewyn Ashdown, Patricia Duigan.

Donna opened by welcoming everyone to the meeting. Thanks to Karel and Maxine for morning tea.

Waikato meeting of July 17 will have a gadget session with Simon from Cochlear. He would like you to bring along your CR230 remote. Anyone interested to let Donna know and she will provide details.

Did you know you can charge your remote on a computer. You utilise the USB port and leave the computer on – this includes laptops.

Donna met a lady in Queenstown recently who revealed that she needed a stapedectomy (This is for calcification on the stapes bone in the middle ear – the smallest in the human body. The build-up of bone keeps the stapes from moving normally, resulting in a type of hearing loss called conductive hearing loss). Her uncle had had a successful operation 20 years ago (perhaps due to genetics). Bit nervous about having it happen as she would need to be off work for 1 month with no noise, and she works in child care and has young children. A suggestion was to utilise noise reducing ear muffs. Also to get it done as soon as possible.

Enclosed is a copy of the article in the June 20 edition of NZ Womans Day featuring Tauranga members Josie and Aynsley and their CI journeys – especially growing up using hearing aids. Also advertised the Sounds of Life photo exhibition and information regarding how many on the waiting list, funding issue and cost involved. (2 pages)

The national forum that The Pindrop Foundation was hoping to have in September this year has been moved to March next year. The recent Sounds of Life exhibition which was held in Auckland is going to be staged also in Hamilton, Tauranga and Wellington. Watch this space.

Did you know that the butterfly is deaf? A recent internet search revealed that the butterfly is used as a visual to highlight deafness.

Recent NZ Herald news of a hearing cat on a sailing boat. Enclosed is a copy (2 pages) or here is the link:

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/travel/news/article.cfm?c_id=7&objectid=11671871

Recent reading of Auckland library books on dogs, Donna read that a deaf dog can be taught to respond to sign language.

Dogs in Action – working dogs and their stories featured a New Zealander Celia King and her hearing dog Kiri, of Auckland. Kiri is her 2nd hearing dog - cross between a golden retriever and red border collie (a golden collie).

Previous dog Tara died of a heart attack suddenly. Celia frequently flies from Auckland to Wellington each week. (2 articles via internet search)

Donna has recently been to Invercargill and had managed to catch up with Madz who has a hearing dog and had recently been featured in a NZ Womans Weekly article (May 30 - enclosed, 2 pages). Madz is a regular on the Trade Me message board and is regularly asking about hearing aids and CIs. She has been tested by her audiologist and information has recently forwarded for CI eligibility. Donna said she seemed to hear well and Madz replied she worked at it. She has no hearing in one ear and a small amount in the other. She had been told a few years ago that she would be eligible for a CI. She has 2 daughters and they both have hearing issues.

Pam had given Donna an article about a hearing dog from Stanmore Bay. (1 page)

Also as an introduction to our speakers Donna had come across an article in the North Shore Times with Helen and her hearing dog Abbey. (1 page)

Marian said about recently reading about a Napier man whose landlord said he was not able to keep a dog on the property. He had a hearing dog and this had come to the attention of Mojo Mathers (1 page) or here is the link:

http://m.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c_id=6&objectid=11592879

Upon further investigation – he now has a home (1 page) or here is the link:

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/hawkes-bay-today/news/article.cfm?c_id=1503462&objectid=11640577

Donna introduced our guest speakers who are from Hearing Dogs NZ. Danielle Beston who is a volunteer speaker, new marketing manager Kirsten, and Helen Ware with her hearing dog Abbey.

Danielle was our first speaker. Hearing dogs are trained to international standards. There are 60 Hearing Dogs in NZ with 6 currently being trained. They alert their owner to everyday noises of fax, doorbells, alarms, clocks, phone and text messages, baby alarms by either nudging, pawing or licking their owner. One sound they can't hear is smoke alarms. Once the owner is alerted, the dog will take them to where the sound is coming from. If there is a fire, the owner is alerted by the dog dropping flat to the ground.

Johanna and Shandy, the first owner and trainer of a Hearing Dog in NZ were alerted in a fire between 4 and 5 in the morning. Joanna checked the kitchen and found nothing and didn't smell smoke and thought it was a false alarm. She looked out the window and spied the neighbours house on fire. The Fire Brigade were alerted and this was 4 minutes before other calls came in about the fire.

How are dogs chosen? They come from breeders, animal shelters, SPCAs. If dogs are under training they are never failed and are rehomed.

The training takes 6 months and this is to an international standard. Any breed is acceptable, however older people with no sections prefer smaller dogs. The dogs need to have the right temperament and be hard working and intelligent.

The main training facility is New Plymouth with a satellite unit in Auckland. Claire is their full time trainer. Volunteers take dogs home at weekends for socialising. A match may take between 6 to 24 months to select the best outcome for both owner and dog. The recipient spends a week in New Plymouth with the dog. The New Plymouth facility has an office play area, cottage, with donated furniture with sounds the dog needs to learn. After 1 week, the dog goes home with the owner and has to readjust to new surroundings and have to learn to adapt.

Eligibility for a hearing dog, normally someone over 80 with a profound or moderate to severe hearing loss. They need to be physically able to care for the dog. If they have never had a dog before they need to be taught how to look after it. There needs to be no other dogs, an outside grass area, and preferably live on their own.

The history of hearing dogs in New Zealand relates back to when Johanna was living in the UK in 1998. In 1997 her flatmate moved out. Some friends had tried to visit her and the next time they saw her asked where she had been. She thought about it and realised she was at home all the time. She did not hear them knock. She decided to take 6 months unpaid leave and trained a dog. She finished her training when she moved to South Australia and then came back to New Zealand.

She helped develop the policies and structure to international standard in New Zealand. Hearing Dogs were passed through Government very quickly. They needed sponsors to help set up and originals were the Shirley Beard Trust, TSB Community trust and Hearing New Plymouth. They purchased 1 ha of land in New Plymouth.

There are different levels of sponsorship from corporate to one-off donations.

Minu a miniature poodle or a noodle poodle was placed with Jenna in 2004 in Wellington. She works at Te Papa and Minu has her own ID tag and worked out on the treadmill in the gym. She went to a dog show and was placed Highly Commended. Jenna moved to Auckland in 2007 (1 year before Minu was retired) and was part of the Deaf Association on the North Shore. Normally for toilet breaks, they would use the stairs. One particular day Minu wanted to take the lift. When Jenna pushed the button of the lift, the doors opened and a lady was thankful. She had been trapped in the lift and no one could hear her. Minu had been rescued from the pound.

Danielle had brought along cards, notepads, pens and bookmarks if anyone wished to purchase and support Hearing Dogs.

It costs approx \$30,000 to train a dog.

Marian: can any dog trained outside be a Hearing Dog.

Danielle: Yes there are exceptions

Lyn: I had a fox terrier who was very smart and taught herself and she learnt to be my ears. The Field Officer for Hearing Dogs gave her accreditation. Registration becomes a very small cost as they are service dogs.

Danielle: When they wear their yellow coat they are able to use public transport.

John: What happens when people go on holiday overseas.

Helen: At one stage I had 3 hearing dogs while people went away. Once I had two hearing dogs so they were one on each side, like they were in stereo.

Generally dogs are not kennelled and if people get ill, they go back to the Hearing Dogs centre. People with hearing dogs don't travel overseas much.

Donna: Would going overseas become a problem because of needing vaccinations.

Helen: Australia is fine but further afield is a problem.

One family left their hearing dog with her so they could focus on their grandchildren. Sometimes volunteers look after the dog.

Marian: What happens to a hearing dog when it is retired.

Helen: The dog may stay with the family, however the yellow jacket says retired hearing dog.

The size of the hearing dog depends on the individual. Some people need a bigger dogs as they may have balance or other issues.

Helen and Abbey came to the front of the room at approx 11am.

Abbey got up on the chair and laid down, however normally at home she is not allowed on the furniture.

Dogs being allowed on furniture is dependent on the dog, whether it has health issues and perhaps is retired some have lasted 11-12 years.

Abbey has been with Helen for 3 years.

Helen was born forceps to a nurse mother and policeman father. In later years had hearing problems and had a high fall and lost all hearing. At the age of 7 got first hearing aid. The right was good with the left bad. At age of 12 years between Christmas and New Year in hospital her hearing aids were not working. Her good ear had nothing and her left was now her best ear.

She has been brought up in a hearing world so never learn sign language. Her twin brother Colin was her helper. He got taken to ballet and also poetry reading.

Helen has 2 children, Sarah 19 and Jayden 14. She did not know about hearing dogs when they were smaller.

She used a baby monitor and would sleep on one side so she could see the monitor. One night her hubby leapt out of bed and went to Sarah's room. She had only made 1 cry, and sleeping in her bassinet, her face was blue. She ended up staying in hospital overnight. As Helen's husband worked away a lot it was lucky he was home when that happened. As a result of this near disaster, Helen slept on the floor in her daughter's room by the bassinet. This has resulted in back and neck problems. These problems would not have arisen if she had had a hearing dog then. A few years later she was on a fundraiser walk for hearing dogs but thought she was not deaf enough. She could hear the phone ring and had smoke detection.

At night she had bad tinnitus and would wake up 6-7 times and check the kids and doors and windows locked because she thought she heard noises.

She decided to apply for a hearing dog. The application needed forms filled out. Questions about exercise, social life. She was working part time and had 2 children who went to a lot of sports.

Six months later she was told she could have a hearing dog. She asked 'what's wrong with it'. Abbey had been the top dog in her litter and her brother is also a hearing dog. She is bossy, active, and my lifestyle was busy. I checked her out online and thought she was a beagle.

When she went to New Plymouth she said that's not my dog. I stayed in the cottage for 1 week, learnt to groom, walk, sound training. It was an intense week. As Abbey

hadn't finished her training I went home without her. This was October and I did not receive her until March. She gets free registration.

Helen was working part time. They had to put a gate on a doorway. As she was working in an office with a workshop attached, the first week Abbey was kept on a lead. It was all new to her to have a lead attached to her arm all the time. She would make coffee and collect mail at the start of her day. She had to change her routine to accommodate Abbey.

Because of this precious gift, I decided to give back. I went on a course at college on public speaking. It was a way to give back. I am now able to sleep through the night. Abbey sleeps on the floor by the bed and when the cats are fighting, she jumps up like a rocket, runs across the bed, barking madly and Helen wonders what the problem is.

Abbey goes everywhere. Helen recently had to go for an MRI and didn't realise Abbey was unable to go there. Abbey went with the technicians in a little room and sat up on the desk watching through the window.

Some places she is not allowed are intensive care and private residences. It is illegal to not allow her in all public places. One place also is the zoo. And Helen thinks this may be because of contamination. However at her house she has a menagerie of cats, birds and rabbits.

When Helen was a student at Massey, Abbey would go off and have to say hello to her 'peeps' while Helen would make her way to her seat. Abbey would follow afterwards after having greeted everyone in her way. Mum was ignored.

Abbey is a god send as the children have gotten older. She alerts to the telephone, the smoke detector and door alarm – it's been a blessing. If Helen goes anywhere without the lead she feels naked. When Abbey is out walking, when she has on her yellow jacket, it's like her Sunday best and is on her best behaviour. When the jacket is taken off, she is a normal dog and takes off racing around everywhere, barking madly.

Obviously if she barks, deaf people can't hear her. 2 paw pats on your legs and takes you to the door bell. Each time she alerts, she gets a treat. This is positive reinforcement. A note is on the door to please ring. However people knock.

When Helen has flown, she lists Abbey as a guide dog. When guide dogs are on the plane, they are given an incontinence pad to sleep on. They toilet on demand. Abbey sat beside Helen's seat on the plane. However with take off, Abbey was not strapped in and slid onto the feet of the man behind. Helen now puts Abbey by her feet.

Helen is amazed that people greet Abbey before they greet her. She is a great conversation starter. They always ask lots of questions.

When a hearing dog is in public, they are not working. When approaching a hearing dog it is always best to ask if you can pat. Especially with children, it's best to ask first. Quite a number of people just approach and pat. This is not allowed with a guide dog.

Every day they wake up and go for a walk, have breakfast and their day begins.

Helen loves tattoos and her tattoo man just melts when he sees Abbey and he's tall, solid and macho.

Donna: Is there ever any problem when you are out and about with regards to other dogs?

Helen. I once saw a guide dog which seemed to have no control and was lungeing. A young child was knocked over and obviously the dog was young. She rang the Blind Foundation.

Once when out at Animates, there was a dog which was a sheepskin on legs. Abbey just went between its legs to get its attention. She reached up and put a paw on its nose and slammed it on the concrete.

Helen's physio said he had met someone who had seen a super dog. This had been Abbey who they had seen in a supermarket with her yellow 'cape' on.

Helen has speaking engagements and sometimes goes to schools. One day she was to speak to 4 classes. Abbey would sniff and lick children's hands from the first 2 rooms, but by then was tired and not interested.

It is interesting to note that Helen has the same phone for home and work. However at work Abbey is under her desk and does not react. Only when at home. Sounds to be alerted are mainly in the home.

Di: how do you get on at work with alarms, etc.

Once at the mall, the alarm went off and it's a different sound, and Abbey looks at me as if to say is that for me.

Di find the concept intriguing that the dog knows that at home Helen needs help while out and about others are able to help her.

Maxine: What happens when you stay at motels.

Helen lets them know she has a hearing dog. Particular motels in the areas of Christchurch, New Plymouth and Napier are familiar with hearing dogs and there is no problem. She knows of others who travel with a portable kennel.

People don't understand and this is due to a lack of knowledge of service dogs.

Donna: how do you educate them.

You just let them know you are coming and hearing dogs are allowed in public.

John: When I worked for Telecom I was a puppy walker and a manager told me to take the dog outside. I said there was no problem with the dog and he said he was going to report me. I was in a mobile position so was going into a number of departments.

Hearing dogs are not as publicised as guide dogs. When Helen goes to the mall she realises she will not be able to take only 10 minutes because she is always stopped by someone and she is willing to talk to them. Originally she was not confident to do so. She had one lady sit down on the floor and talk to Abbey at her level. She told a friend that the dog was deaf.

Di – you would probably qualify for a CI.

My audiologist before I got Abbey said sounds from a CI would be different. Because she had had hearing and then lost it, she finds her Bluetooth streaming to her hearing aid works well. She has been told of the Donald Duck under water sound that many CI recipients first receive after switch on.

Di – yes it does sound like that but it gets better.

Donna – yes a CI is a different sound.

Helen said she copes. However recently being made redundant she is looking to the future. She has worked since she was 18 working in customer service and accounts. When her children come home, they find Abbey to find mum. Her daughter was recently talking through the wall to her mum, so Helen just ignored her.

Pam: If you have a CI are you eligible for a hearing dog.

Yes you are eligible with a CI.

Donna: I remember a story about a man in New Zealand who had a CI and had a hearing dog.

Kirsten: They have a child who has recently received a hearing dog who has a CI, however he needs other support also.

Hearing dogs are trained to be quiet. As a service dog, they are unobtrusive.

Helen went somewhere and was told pets aren't allowed in here – so she kept walking.

Hearing dogs do not eat human food as they go where food is served. However Abbey took a liking to a hot cross bun left on a coffee table.

Abbey has a mind of her own and when playing catch with a ball has had enough, holds onto the ball and walks away.

Helen feels Abbey has enriched her life and given her an extra degree of confidence and Abbey is a great companion.

Helen recently asked the Fire Department what her escape plan would be. They were unable to help her. Obviously Abbey gets Helen, and then does she get her 2 children or hope they have gotten out on their own. Also it depends on where in the house the fire has started.

Raewyn got both Danielle and Helen up to the front of the room.

Thank you very much Danielle for your informative talk on the history and where the dogs come from and how people are selected. It has been really great.

Helen – Wow. Obviously having Abbey has given you security and confidence as well as companionship. We have all have a great time listening.

Many thanks to you both. A small gift to both and a donation to hearing dog was made. The meeting closed approx 12noon.

Below - the fabulous Abbey.

