



“Korero Mai, What’s On & Whakaaro Pai” 21—NOVEMBER, 2011

A newsletter for those interested in the provision of services for people with experience of mental illness, articles from Service Users/Tangata Whaiora and “What’s On” - promoting educational and recreational activities for under \$5.00 per event.

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Coming Events: November, 2011:

Wednesdays: “Real Arts” 10-3pm at Real Tart—Gold Coin only
 Thursdays: “Mental Health Matters”—Access Radio 104.4FM 9.30am. Tune in—Hosted by Like Minds Taranaki
 Tue 1st: Candlelight Service, ‘Touched by Suicide’ - 7pm at the Taranaki Cathedral—Church of St Mary.
 Wed 2nd: Positive Ageing Public Forum 10am at NPDC
 M/T 14/15th: Mental Health First Aid Course Fernlodge, Ing.
 Tue 15th: Suicide Prevention Coordinating Committee mtg at TDHB Health Promotion Unit
 T/F 17/18th: Mental Health First Aid Course TET Event Centre, Stratford
 .
 Thur 17th: Writer’s Support Gp, 2pm, at Like Minds Taranaki
 Mon 21st: Settlement Support NP Mtg, 2pm
 M/T 21/22nd: Mental Health First Aid Course, Heartlands Hotel, Opunake (This one is a youth orientated course)
 T/F 24/25th: Mental Health First Aid Course, Tairoa Lodge, Hawera
 Fri 25th: APEPSI Trust AGM
 Thur 24th: “Mates” Outreach 2.30pm at Progress to Health
 Thur 24th: 5pm, Taranaki CAG meeting
 Sat 26th: Election Day—Your chance to practice democracy by voting—or not voting.

Mental Health First Aid Courses for Taranaki...

Another initiative by the Taranaki Rural Support Trust...

These courses teach members of the public how to provide initial support to a person experiencing a mental health crisis or developing a mental illness.

Course Content covers:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Psychosis
- Substance Abuse
- Suicidal thoughts and behaviours
- Non-suicidal self injury
- Panic attacks
- Traumatic events
- Severe Psychotic states
- Acute effects from alcohol and/or other drug misuse
- Aggressive behaviours.

Participants will learn the symptoms of these mental health problems, where and how to get help and what sort of help has been shown by research to be effective.

Workshops will be held on:

Monday/Tuesday 14th/15th Nov.
 Fernlodge, **Inglewood.**
 Thursday/Friday 17th/18th Nov.
 TET Event Centre, **Stratford.**
 Monday/Tuesday 21st/22nd Nov.
 Headlands Hotel, **Opunake.** (This one is a youth course)
 Thursday/Friday 24th/25th Nov.
 Tairoa Lodge, **Hawera**

To register:

Contact Tracey Morgan, Taranaki Rural Support Trust 06-757-3423 or taranaki@fedfarm.co.nz

Registration Fee: \$50.00 per person

Four years ago, Paul Bourke organised the ‘first edition’ of these 12 hour courses. They were excellent, great resources, and a ‘sell-out’. Once again, well done Paul.

Gordon Hudson, Like Minds Taranaki

**Whenever I come to a turning point in my life...
 ...I go straight on.**



**“Turn the Page”
has been launched...**



A Taranaki mental health initiative that encourages people to read prescribed books, is being hailed a first for New Zealand - and beyond.

“Turn The Page – Tahuri Atū Te Wharangi” was launched at Puke Ariki in New Plymouth on Monday to kick off Mental Health Awareness Week.

“This is a bit of a first for the Southern Hemisphere as far as we know,” says Andrew Brock, Midlands Health Network community relationship manager. “It’s very, very exciting.”

This collaboration between Midlands Health, Puke Ariki and Like Minds Taranaki is for people struggling with mild to moderate mental illness.

They can go to their GP for a “Turn the Page” prescription, which they can take to Puki Ariki or one of the district libraries to borrow a book for free.

Andrew says the programme is now being rolled out to the rest of Taranaki and is likely to extend to other parts of New Zealand.

“The idea is that it will continue to grow and get bigger and bigger, and improve the well-being and outlook of people out there.”

First in Taranaki, then Midland, then New Zealand, maybe even Australia...



New Venture: At the “Turn The Page” launch at Puke Ariki are, from the left, Gordon Hudson (Like Minds Taranaki), New Plymouth Mayor Harry Duynhoven, Dale Cousens (Puke Ariki), Andrew Brock (Midlands Health) and Jane Waite (Puke Ariki).

New Plymouth Mayor Harry Duynhoven, who officially launched the programme, says that statistics show 46 percent of the population will experience mental illness at some time in their lives.

“Yet, despite the fact it is so common, the stigma and discrimination of having a mental illness means that only two out of every three people seek help and support.”

Harry says that libraries are treasured community spaces, where people are made welcome.

“We hope that the accessible open nature of libraries means that through Turn the Page more people feel able to reach out and find help so they to can reach their potential.”

Puke Ariki services delivery manager Dale Cousens says the two-wing knowledge and heritage

center was delighted to be invited to be part of Turn the Page.

“It took us all of two seconds to say yes when Andrew approached us.”

She says the concept came from a successful UK model – “We have taken and made it our own.”

Like Minds Taranaki manager Gordon Hudson says “Turn the Page” lets patients learn more about their mental health situation in

their own time, at their own convenience, and they can use information to better manage their recovery and ongoing wellness.

“It’s a win, win, win project. It’s not just going to be something that GPs can be part of, but anybody in the mental health sector or family/Whanau can recommend it to people.

It’s exciting that the libraries have taken this on.”

Story by Virginia Winder, published in North Taranaki Midweek. 5th October.

One of the World Cup Cartoons...



Reprinted from the Manawatu Evening Standard

For sale—15 left!

“Seeds of Hope” Tee Shirts
Top quality—Sizes L and 4XXX
\$10.00 only

Contact: Like Minds Taranaki.
06-759-0966
mental.health@xtra.co.nz

**Employment :
Taking the first step...**

A guidebook for jobseekers with health issues.
Free copies available from Like Minds Taranaki.

**“Turn the Page
Tahuri atu te Whārangī”**

Recommended booklist is now on www.likemindstaranaki.org.nz website...

Check it out and refer...



Mental Health Awareness Week, 2011—the week that was...

A most enjoyable week all round.

This year, as in the past, a dedicated group of Service Users/Service providers developed a programme that had something for everyone.

It all started with the **WITT student Quiz**. Most successful, with 11 teams taking place—all based on the excellent www.likemindstaranaki.org.nz website. Heaps of prizes—heaps of fun.

The **Midweek feature** attracted 8 organisations and resulted in almost three pages of promotion. Local identity, Kevin Brown provided a wonderful personal story about how “*Turning the Page*” helped him reach recovery.

Special thanks too to advertisers:

- Healthcare NZ
- TDHB MH & A Services
- Settlement Support
- Supporting Families in Mental Illness
- Te Whare Puawai O Te Tangata Trust
- Otago University MISP
- Midlands Health Network
- Like Minds Taranaki

The **Hawera Star** featured 7 organisations and was a centre page spread.

Again thanks to advertisers:

- Healthcare NZ
- TDHB MH & A Services
- Supporting Families in Mental Illness
- Te Whare Puawai O Te Tangata Trust
- Otago University MISP
- Midlands Health Network
- Like Minds Taranaki



Access Radio promoted the event on three occasions with 160 minutes of air time. Thank you Access Radio 104.4FM!

Most FM and Puke Ariki News used Mental Health Awareness Week for their 30 min programme. Thank you Virginia Winder.

The Self-Stigma and Self-Discrimination workshop in New Plymouth was most successful. So successful that we have sufficient numbers to facilitate two more in North Taranaki.

The **Public Presentations** in Hawera and New Plymouth attracted low numbers – with 26 braving the atrocious conditions Monday evening.



Once again, the MC was Nic Magrath. Nic shared her story of her journey to recovery. A special thank you to the TDHB MH&A Services for their sponsorship of this event.

The **Karaoke, Dance, Social in Hawera** attracted well over 100 people from Waitara to Wanganui and was the best ever.



Kevin Brown presents Chad Chadwick with a small token of appreciation for his dedicated service to past Karaoke/Dance/Social events. *Is that a halo above Chad?*

The event received specific sponsorship from Progress to Health, Pathways and Like Minds Taranaki.

The **Scrap-booking workshop** was another great success. Sponsored by Supporting Families in Mental illness, 15 people enjoyed participating.

The **second Self Stigma and Self-Discrimination workshop** in Hawera was equally successful. Congratulations to facilitators Cecily Bull and Karen Wehle from Like Minds Taranaki.

WAVES provided a poster competition with prizes sponsored by Like Minds Taranaki. And the artwork shall adorn their office walls.

The “**Book of Positive Affirmations**” also went well and will be published later next year.

A varied programme, made all the more significant by the launch of “**Turn the Page**” and the public attention that provided.

This project is expected to go to Central then South Taranaki, then throughout the Midland Region and around New Zealand—perhaps even Australia.

**New Crisis Team
Free Number is here...
Ring: 0508 277 478**

An optimist stays up to midnight to see the new year in.
A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves. Bill Vaughan



Supported by the TSB Community Trust

WHAT'S ON NGĀ KAUPAPA O TE WĀ

Issue 52— Compiled BY people on limited incomes FOR people on limited incomes...
Please place on a notice board somewhere where people on limited incomes will notice it...

NOVEMBER 2011

- Until 27th Nov** **Len Lye: All Souls Carnival**—Govett-Brewster Art Gallery—10am-5pm. This features Len Lyes film, painting and kinetic sculptures—a dazzling choreographed exhibition of sound, light and movement. and is part of the [‘REAL New Zealand Festival’](#). **FREE**
- Until 14th Dec** **It's Not Just a Game**—Whanau, Whakapapa, Whutupaoro—Puke Ariki Main Gallery. The tales and taonga of tribal rugby and visitors. ‘It's Not Just a Game’ is about whole communities and families and their loyalty to tribes, clubs and communities. **FREE**
- Until 5th Nov** **Taranaki National Art Awards**—Sandfords Event Centre, Tasman St, **OPUNAKE**. 10am—5pm daily. This is an annual event and is a collection of art entered by artists from around NZ. There are over 230 pieces entered and seven categories of work: painting, rural Taranaki, 3D, works on paper, fibre art, toi tu Taranaki and photography. **\$2**
- Until 6th Nov** **MORE FM Fringe Garden Festival**—With over 50 gardens on display—programmes available at i-Sites and libraries. Some gardens are **FREE** or **Gold Coin** with the most expensive just **\$2**
- Until 6th Nov** **Powerco Taranaki Garden Spectacular**—For more details www.taft.co.nz/gardenfestnz/ or call 0800 RHODOFEST (0800746363) Various Garden fees apply.
- Tue 1st Nov** **Hollard Gardens; Walk and Talk**—Hollard Gardens, 1686 Upper Manaia Rd, **KAPONGA**. 2pm Sandy Powell will take you on a tour of the garden discussing a variety of plants that are often over-looked and under-rated but would make a fine specimen in your home garden. **FREE**
- Wed 2nd Nov** **NP Positive Ageing Trust Seminar ‘Are you prepared for the End of Life Events?’** This seminar includes services and support available when you are caring for a dependent family member at home, preparing for the loss of a family member and caring for yourself after the loss of a family member. A bus will be provided from the NP Racecourse to the NPDC, leaving at 9:30am. Morning tea first at 9:30am then goes from 10am to 12pm. **FREE**
- Wed 2nd Nov** **Tupare Garden Walk**—Tupare Garden, 487 Mangorei Rd. 9:30am. Take a guided walk with Garden Manager Mitch Graham, highlighting the trees which are the essence of Tupare. **FREE**
- Wed 2nd Nov** **Parkinson's Awareness Information Evening**—DeBurghs Lodge, Lawry St, NP 5:30-7:30pm. With speakers Dr Di Stokes, Angela Solomons,(Community Law) and Ruth Wiseman & Anne Hawkins (a personal account of their support for their Dad with Parkinson's) **FREE**
- Thu 3rd Nov** **Hollard Garden; Walk and Talk**—1686 Upper Manaia Rd, **KAPONGA**. Join Senior Gardener Sandy Powell and hear her impressions of Hollard Gardens and its impact on her, with the odd story or two on what makes Hollards such a great place to work. **FREE**
- Fri 4th Nov** **Pukeiti Garden; Walk and Talk**—2290 Carrington Rd. 3pm. With Garden Manager, Andrew Brooker sharing his knowledge and passion for everything Rhodo, from chainsaw pruning to fertilising and everything in-between. **FREE**
- Sat 5th Nov** **Hollard Gardens—A Series of Talks**—Hollard Gardens, 1686 Upper Manaia Rd, **KAPONGA**
A series of talks on groceries from your backyard: **10am: Natural Nourishment: Add some variety and vitamins into your dinner** **11:30am: Unearthing the Taste of the Past: Heirloom cooking demonstrations** **1:30pm: Finishing Touch: Herbs—not just a pretty garnish.** **FREE**

Latin American Film Festival—Govett-Brewster Art Gallery is running a selection of Latin American Films for the public to view over two weekends—Sat 12th, Sun 13th, Sat 19th and Sun 20th of November. The first film is running at 1pm and the second film is running at 3pm on each day. The film schedule and details can be found at www.govettbrewster.com **FREE**

“What’s On” is emailed to over 300 organisations in Taranaki and sent on to 100s more via their email networks and displayed on many notice boards etc. It has become quite wide-reaching and could be worthwhile for you to consider using it to promote your educational and/or recreation activity – if it is free or \$5 or less.



Support Group— Theatre Lounge, Hawera Community Centre, Albion Street, **HAWERA**—10am—12pm. Meeting fortnightly, this group is for those who suffer or have suffered from anxiety and depression. It's a chance to share and help support others in a relaxed environment. For more information contact Tom Gibson 06 7646417. Tea and coffee provided. **FREE**

Touched By Suicide Support Group—Meets every third Thursday of the month from 7pm-9pm. Held at 83 Hine St, this group is led by trained facilitators and offers care, understanding and support to anyone affected by the loss of a loved one through suicide. Any further enquiries phone Jo on 021 027 369 35 or Tiaki on 06 757 9300. **FREE**

South Taranaki Touched By Suicide Support Group—Meets the first Thursday of the month from 7pm-9pm in the Theatre Lounge at the Community Centre in Albion St, **HAWERA** Any further enquiries phone Jo on 021 027 369 35 or Tiaki on 06 757 9300. **FREE**

Post Natal Support Group – 1st & 3rd Wed of each month at the Women's Centre 10-12pm. For more information phone Like Minds Taranaki on 06 759 0966. **FREE**

Bipolar Condition Support Group—A friendly, informal small group meeting weekly in part of the old Barrett St Hospital on Wednesday evenings from 7-8pm. If interested please contact either Darren on 758 8918 or Kathryn on 751 1390. **FREE**

Taranaki Kidney Support Group—This group was set up by patients with kidney disease for families, carers, and transplant recipients and supporters around the whole Taranaki area. They meet on the first Monday of every month at the Creche in the Women's Centre, Community House, 32 Leach St at 6:30pm. Refreshments are provided and all are welcome. **FREE**

Sun 6th Nov Swinging the Len Lye Walk—Govett-Brewster Art Gallery—11:30am. Len Lye Assistant curator, Paul Brobbel gives a guided tour through the exhibition *Len Lye: All Souls Carnival*. **FREE**

7th–26th Nov Paintings Exhibition—Lysaght Watt Gallery, 4-6 Union St, **HAWERA**. Paintings by Chester and Abi Borrows and Sheryl Gandy. Gallery hours: Mon-Fri 10am-4pm, Sat 10am-1pm. **FREE**

Fri 11th Nov Taranaki Branch Vintage Car Club of NZ 50th Jubilee Rally—New Plymouth and surrounds—On Saturday the rally departs from the Wind Wand—first car away at 9:30am and at the end of the rally there will be a cavalcade of cars around Vogeltown Park, Carrington St. **FREE**

Fri 11th Nov 11 11 11 Festival of Cyberformance—Govett-Brewster Art Gallery Theatre—10am-5pm. Go and see 13 interactive performances throughout the day, streaming live from all over the world. You can preview the performances at http://upstage.org.nz/blog/?page_id=2350 **FREE**

Fri 18th Nov A & P Show Parade—Hawera Town Centre, **HAWERA**. 6:30pm. The pre-show entertainment and children's activities start from 4:30pm and include dancing, live music, face painting and much more. There are prizes up for grabs to those who enter a float or window display. **FREE**

Fri 25th Nov Hollard Gardens Volunteer Recruitment Day—1686 Upper Manaia Rd, **KAPONGA** 10am-3pm. Learn how you can be involved and find out more about the rare plants in Bernie's Home Garden. Activities include a garden walk, talk and lunch—please RSVP on 0800 736 222. **FREE**

This space could be used to promote one of your events, please contact Stephanie Mapley at Like Minds Taranaki

We are very keen to hear of events from Central, Coastal and South Taranaki - ring us on 0800-454-536

The next "What's On" will be in late November for December, let us know what is different, fun & almost free...

Mon, Wed, Fri BoxFit Taranaki Classes—50 Rimu St—5:30pm. Bring a towel and water. **\$2**

Every Tue Womens Only BoxFit Class in **WAITARA** at the Waitara War Memorial Hall (theatre room) from 12.30pm - 1.30pm, Bring a towel and water **\$4**

Mon&Thur Yoga at the Women's Centre—Every Mon at 5:15 pm and every Thur at 10:30am. **\$5**

Every Tue Tai Chi at the Women's Centre—Community House 32 Leach St.—1:30pm **\$5**

Every Wed Real Arts—10am-3pm at Real TArt Community Gallery—a great opportunity for people with experience of mental illness or other disabilities, to participate in art and craft. Call Gordon on 759 0966. **GOLD COIN**

Every Thur Relax at Lunch—Gentle yoga, breathing techniques and relaxation with awareness—12:30—1:30pm—Community House 32 Leach St, bring mat, blanket & cushion. **GOLD COIN**

Every Thur 'Mental Health Matters' - Access Radio 104.4FM—9:30—10am. Every Thursday. Like Minds Taranaki are the hosts of this show discussing a wide range of special interest topics and topical events. Contact us at 759 0966 if you have any queries concerning any of the issues raised. **FREE**

Every Fri Creative Space – Art and craft for people with a disability—83 Hine St, 9am-4pm. **GOLD COIN**

Every Fri Whizzy Walkers— Meet at Plunket House at 10am. A walking group which has been formed specifically for caregivers who would like to join others in a brisk walk with their child and buggy for about an hour - a great way to make new friends while staying active. **FREE**



“When circumstances beyond your control lead to a rural crisis—be it financial, climatic or personal—The Taranaki Rural Support Trust is ready to assist.”

All trust members are rural people with local knowledge and experience.

- Harvey Leach 06-764-8333
- Derek Gibson 06-752-7642
- John McMurray 06-756-7099
- Graeme Hight 06-754-4404
- Peter Adamski 06-751-4217
- Hannah Dent 06-757-3423
- Paul Bourke 06-761-8895
- Blue Read 06-752-3698
- Katrina Knowles 021-831-944
- Dave Hopkins 06-757-3423
- Office: 06-757-3423



Some of Ashleigh Brilliant's thoughts...

How little I know about myself—although I am considered a leading authority on the subject.

I come from a good home—that's why they don't want me back.

I'm a good leader, if you don't try to follow me too closely.

Something about me must obviously give lasting satisfaction, because I'm rarely asked to come again.

I too am a member of the human race, but admittedly, not a very active member.

I would like to speak to whoever is in control of my life, and suggest some improvements.

We must have courage, faith and lunch together sometime soon.



Touched By Suicide

Tuesday, 2nd November, 2011, 7pm @ Taranaki Cathedral

This candlelight service provides an opportunity for people to come and remember their loved ones.

There will be an opportunity to light a candle.



Christmas Card Special

packs of 8 + envelopes, only \$5.00 per set.

From Like Minds Taranaki—mental.health@xtra.co.nz or 06-759-0966



These works are part of a community art initiative promoting mental health awareness

Election Day

Saturday 26th November 2011

Election year is that period when politicians get free speech mixed up with cheap talk.

J.B. Kidd.
(not really!)

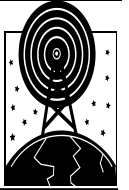
Nevertheless, it is an opportunity to think carefully about what is best for us, our family and our community—and vote for it.

Coming Soon on Access Radio...



November:

- 3rd: Stress management (1)
- 10th: Repeat of above
- 17th: Stress management (2)
- 24th: Repeat of above



9.30am every Thursday

Mental Wellness Groups

Like Minds Taranaki hosts regular support and discussion groups, where you can share your stories and experiences with others who are also on the journey to recovery. Enjoy a friendly, relaxed atmosphere and speak with complete confidentiality.

You can also benefit from writing and arts groups that allow you to tap into your creative side.

NEW PLYMOUTH GROUP TIMES AND LOCATIONS
Contact Like Minds 06-759-0966

Discussion Group:

2nd & 4th Wednesday each month
10.30 am—12 pm
Taranaki Disability Information Center, Young Street, NP

Creative Writing Group:

3rd Thursday each month
2—3 pm
Like Minds Office
3rd Floor New Stirling Sports Bldg.
Devon Street West

Post Natal Support Group:

Alternate Wednesdays
10 am
New Plymouth Women's Centre
32 Leach Street

Thought for the Issue:

When one door of happiness closes, another one opens. But often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one that has opened for us.

Helen Keller

“Better, Sooner, More Convenient” Care for People with Dementia in Taranaki!

Taranaki District Health Board's, Mental Health Service for Older People (MHSOP) has been chosen as a “demonstration site” by the Ministry of Health, for an initiative to improve (**better**) the standard of care for people with mild-moderate uncomplicated dementia (**sooner**) in collaboration with Primary Care (**more convenient**).

NZ has a rapidly ageing population. People from the baby boom generation are now entering retirement. According to the Alzheimers NZ 2008 Dementia Economic Impact report, by 2026 over 74,000 New Zealanders will have dementia. This follows the worldwide trend, where the numbers with dementia are doubling every 20 years. There is currently no cure for dementia.

However, the benefits of early diagnosis of dementia include the provision of earlier intervention with support, which reduces the risks of: accidents in the home, driving, abuse and hospital admission. It provides people with the opportunity to prepare for the future e.g. arranging an Enduring Power of Attorney, updating wills, moving homes or visiting family overseas. Having a diagnosis often provides a better understanding of the changes that are occurring and helps improve relationships within the family. Although there is no cure, medication is now available which can alter the course of the illness.

There are currently a number of barriers to early detection of dementia, which includes misidentification of the early signs of dementia as part of the normal ageing process.

Some people with dementia maintain their social skills,

although they are struggling to cope with the activities of daily living. They may deny that they have a problem due to a lack of insight. The person or their family may be reluctant to report symptoms due to stigma.

In November 2010, Donepezil, a “cognitive enhancing medication” became fully funded by Pharmac in NZ with the authority to be prescribed, not only by specialists but also by GP's for the treatment of Alzheimers or vascular dementia. This is one of the medications which has been available in NZ for several years but which has not been funded and had cost people around \$200-\$300 per month, for treatment, which was commenced and monitored by specialists. As the research base for the effectiveness of Donepezil in slowing down the progress of dementia in selected patients has grown, it has become an accepted treatment option for some people with dementia.

The MHSOP proposed the introduction of “local dementia care pathway referral guidelines for uncomplicated dementia”. The use of a clinical pathway is known to benefit both health professionals and service users (2002, MOH, Wellington “Towards Clinical Excellence.”)

The definition of “uncomplicated dementia” is “a mild to moderate dementia of the Alzheimers or vascular type without any behavioural, mood, psychological, medical or social complicating factors”. MHSOP also proposed improving liaison between primary & secondary care by providing increased educational opportunities and easier access for health care professionals to obtain advice from specialists.

A survey of Taranaki GPs was carried out in March this year to assess GPs confidence in diagnosing and documenting a diagnosis of dementia, informing

people of the diagnosis, providing treatment with medication and referrals for support, provision of resources and specialist referral. It also asked GPs whether they would use the services which MHSOP were planning to provide:

- 96.4% of GP's would use an E-mail consult service with a psychogeriatrician for advice regarding further investigation, treatment and management of people with dementia.
- 89.3% of GP's reported they would use “local dementia care pathway referral guidelines”
- 82.1% reported they would use a pamphlet of local contacts for referrals.
- 71.4% said they would use an E-mail or phone service with a specialist MHSOP nurse.
- 53.6% said they would attend educational workshops on managing dementia.
- 57.1% said they would refer patients newly diagnosed with dementia and their family/whanau to an educational support group run by MHSOP/Alzheimers Society.

Using the survey results, MHSOP developed a “Dementia Care Pathway” and this is currently being distributed to GP's as part of a “dementia care toolkit” which also includes contact details for referrals to support services, information on prescribing Donepezil and “resource packs” of information pamphlets for those diagnosed with dementia and their families.

The first “Living Well with Dementia” educational group for people with dementia and their whanau will be evaluated at its conclusion.

Further information about this initiative can be found at: www.primarymentalhealth.org.nz/page/25176/dementia-care-pathway-collaborative-care/?tab=274

Thank you—Dr Jane Allan
Taranaki DHB
Mental Health & Addictions Services.

Self stigma

Mental illness is, and probably will always be, an enigma to some people. After all, how is it possible for people who have not had first hand experience of this condition, to have a real understanding of what it would be like?

Even after years of learning about the various forms of illness, how they manifest and how to treat them, the majority of mental health professionals can only relate to the experience on an academic level.

It has taken many years to reach the level of understanding the medical profession has about mental illness today; there is still much that is unknown. They are still trying to discover what causes it. How to treat it.

These people who have spent years learning about mental illness still don't have a complete understanding of this condition; is it any wonder that the average person in society may not have a complete grasp of the facts?

Both groups look for ways to explain a phenomenon we still don't understand. The 'man on the street' however, gets much of his knowledge of this subject from a different source than those working in mental health.

Health professionals learn in an academic environment, and are presented with a culmination of years of research – distilled as far as possible into proven facts.

Where does the average person learn about mental illness from? There are many possible sources

of information.

In my case for example, prior to being diagnosed with a mental health condition myself, my understanding of the matter came primarily from popular culture and the media.

The majority of this information was either untrue, or depicted in a way that exaggerated the negative side of the subject.

Mental illness is something that has probably existed as long as mankind itself; only quite recently have we begun to have a scientific understanding of what causes it, and how to treat it. It should come as no surprise that an accumulation of 'myth' and false belief surrounds the topic.

However, it is often the case that we will continue to believe even inaccurate information, until we are made to challenge it. This applies just as much to those with experience of mental illness, as it does to those without it.

The stigma and discrimination attached to mental illness has its roots primarily in ignorance. The information is available - thanks to the internet it has never been easier to find; most will never use the tools available to them, to challenge what they think they know.

Other people's negative beliefs about mental illness can have wide ranging effects on the lives of tangata whaiora, affecting their chances of living the lives they are truly capable of living.

Perhaps the most destructive form of stigma and discrimination is that which comes from within—self, or

internalised, stigma. This is a very real burden that some with mental illness carry, believing that negative opinion truly describes them as people.

Self stigma can discourage individuals from trying to improve their situation, meaning they may not realise their true potential. This personal barrier can be broken though, with inner strength and education.

Finding the strength, and other tools, to help combat self stigma was the focus of two workshops facilitated by Cecily Bull and Karen Wehle from Like Minds Taranaki, during Mental Health Awareness Week 2011. They were held in New Plymouth and Hawera.

I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to attend two of these workshops, to both offer my support and provide additional feedback.

Cecily and Karen did a great job, making those who attended feel at ease while discussing what can often be a difficult issue.

There was a relaxed atmosphere, and a real feeling that although this group had come together as strangers, we were all somehow unified by our experiences.

And perhaps this feeling of unity was one of the most important things to come out of these sessions—when battling the inner demon of self stigma, it's easy to feel isolated and alone. This feeling, however, is as illusory as the stigma itself.

Tony Spencer