

Welcome

A warm welcome to the last issue of The Village for 2023, and my first issue. For those who don't know me, I'm Hilda Johnson.

I was delighted to join HBH Group earlier this year as Group Manager, Support Services & Development, and to lead Virtual Village East with the able support of Ninwa.

I'm very excited to have this opportunity to expand the Village's reach, so that more seniors in our community can access this popular and much-needed social and

support network. One of our priorities is to grow our membership, so please help us spread the word by inviting your friends and acquaintances to join our free Village and make the most of our many senior-friendly seminars, activities, gatherings and outings.

I look forward to meeting you all soon!

Hilda Johnson

Lead, Virtual Village East



Staying stronger for longer

One of the five pillars of ageing well promoted by Virtual Village East is physical wellbeing. As we discovered at our recent information morning, there's always more we can do to keep ourselves physically well and stay 'stronger for longer'.

Most people think of their physical health in terms of cardio fitness, but as you age, strength becomes more critical said Bethan Collings, Age Concern Auckland's Senior Community Strength & Balance Coordinator. "Lack of strength leads to frailty, which in turn, can result in health issues and an increased risk of falls."

"By the time we're in our 50's, our muscle mass has reduced by around 30%. A common

misconception is that if you've got your heart pumping, you're keeping healthy, but you also need to build up muscle strength," she says. Weight and resistance exercises are one of the best ways to build strength, with slow repetitions and heavy loads.

Balance is another important aspect of staying stronger as you age. "Ideally you should do some balance exercises every day," Beth continues. "These can be simple exercises,



but it's critical to do them daily. When you're strong, have good balance and are active, you're preparing yourself well for the years ahead." She also mentions the health benefits of exercising with others, such as joining the VVE Safe & Strong exercise programme. "Social connections are also important as you age, so joining a class with your peers is a win-win!"

Eating well to age well

Diana Anderson, a dietician with Diabetes Foundation Aotearoa, pointed out that as well as exercising, we should eat foods that support muscles, particularly protein. "Fibre is important as we age, so try to change to brown rice and multi-grain bread," she said. "Oats and legumes a great source of fibre, and of course, so are fruit and vegetables."

Diana says it's also vital to include Omega 3 fatty acids, found in fish such as salmon and tuna (tinned products are fine) as well as dairy in your diet. "Plant-based milks are very popular at the moment, but they're fortified with calcium which means they are digested differently to the calcium in dairy milk."



Introducing Hilda Johnson

A warm welcome to Hilda Johnson, who is responsible for HBH Group's community programmes, including Virtual Village East.

A Registered Nurse with over 20 years' aged care and governance experience, Hilda was previously COO of the Selwyn Foundation and a director at the Selwyn Institute. She has a degree in sophrology, business management qualifications and is a registered Gerontology Nurse Specialist.

"It can be easy to skip proper meals when you're on your own, but it's important to still eat healthily," Diana continues. "An omelette, frittata or salad, or a baked potato with a healthy filling such as tinned tuna and veggies are quick and easy meals for one person or a couple."

Proportions are also key, she says, and Diabetes Foundation Aotearoa recommends that the average plate should contain at least one quarter protein and half vegetables.



"As someone with diabetes, I found the tips from Diana were very helpful and practical. I've made changes to my diet previously and seen the impact this can have, so I was most interested in what Diana had to say."

Janet, VVE member

"Now that people are living longer, organisations like VVE have become so much more important," she says. "While people have a longer life span these days, for the majority, their 'health life span' has not changed. Virtual Village East supports seniors to be more resilient through a range

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of activities that build mental, emotional, physical, social, and financial wellbeing and knowhow."

One of the new initiatives Hilda has introduced is a new Advisory Board (see article on page 4). "It's important that VVE members have the opportunity to contribute to the future direction of the organisation, and this is a way of ensuring this happens," she explains.

Moving forward, a priority is to make the Village more accessible to all seniors and to offer more bespoke programmes. "We are working on launching a Positive Ageing workshop in 2024 and see this as an opportunity to grow membership and offer something great to our existing members." Watch this space for more details!



Hilda with her two whippets Topsy and Chappie

Driving Miss Daisy for a stress-free Christmas

The 'silly season' can be a busy and sociable time for all of us, so now's the time to start thinking about your transport options.



Driving Miss Daisy offers an easy and safe way to get your Christmas shopping sorted early - and to get to and from events and gatherings. Here are five ways that Driving Miss Daisy can help you enjoy a stress-free Christmas...

1. It's a great time of the year to arrange a 'shopping bus' with other members. Anne or Brenda can pick you up and drop you off to make it easy for everyone.
2. Beat the rush by booking in a shopping trip or two ahead of Christmas. That way, you can focus on your shopping list rather than the stress of finding parking and negotiating traffic.
3. Driving Miss Daisy can also help with your Xmas grocery shopping, providing a door-to-door service and a hand with carrying your shopping.
4. Treat yourself - make being 'chauffeur-driven' your Xmas present to yourself rather than having to worry about driving.
5. Treat a loved one and buy them a voucher for Driving Miss Daisy as a Christmas present. There's nothing nicer than been driven by someone else!

Driving Miss Daisy does get busy before Christmas, so it's best to book ahead:
Anne McClean (Pakuranga) - 027 472 9921
Brenda Stuart (Howick) - 021 410 476

Introducing our new Advisory Board

A new initiative from Hilda Johnson, the Virtual Village Advisory Board will provide members with the opportunity to contribute and shape the Village as it grows.

"For the Village to be successful, it needs to be relevant to the needs of seniors today and the Advisory Board will contribute to this," says Hilda.

The Board will meet at least every two months and discuss upcoming events and new initiatives. "I was delighted with the response we had to our request to join the Board and would like to welcome the following founding members: Barbara Davis, David Dwerryhouse, Lesley Hinson and Clare Martin," says Hilda. "Together, we look forward to delivering a wide range activities and events, and to ensuring more

seniors have access to this unique social and support network."



Left to right: Lesley Hinson, David Dwerryhouse, Barbara Davis and Clare Martin

What makes Virtual Village East so special?

Virtual Village East is a social and support network for seniors like no other. Our members tell us they join for a whole host of reasons and here are just some of them:

- ▶ You can pick and choose from a variety of activities, including exercise classes, seminars, get-togethers, outings, or weekly walks – there's always something going on.
- ▶ Membership is free and so are most of our activities and even transport.
- ▶ Our activities are specially curated to help seniors stay active, connected, and supported through our 5 Pillars of Ageing Well.
- ▶ They're also designed to challenge you, get you out of the house, and help you age positively. Getting older doesn't mean giving up on life, in fact the opposite is true when you are a member!
- ▶ Every time you attend an activity or event, you're learning new things, making friends, and enjoying social connections – the 3 most important factors to a happier, healthier, and fulfilling life.
- ▶ If you're not well or can't get out, some of our activities are held online, such as our Mid-Monthly Meet-Ups.
- ▶ You can be involved as much or as little as you like to suit your needs.

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