

## Welcome

This year, we're excited to celebrate five years of Virtual Village East! That's five years of helping seniors in our community to stay connected and supported, learn new skills, meet new people, get stronger and fitter, and enjoy richer, more fulfilled lives.

On page 2 we feature photos of Virtual Village East members enjoying some of our many activities and outings during the past 5 years. We also discuss spirituality, what it means, and why it's such a vital part of

resilient ageing. And, following the huge success of our local village, we share our plans to establish more Virtual Villages around New Zealand (see page 3).

Happy anniversary and I look forward to celebrating with many of you soon!

**Hilda Johnson**  
CEO, Virtual Village East



## Celebrating five years of 'Village life'

This year marks five years since the launch of Virtual Village East, our social and support network for seniors. In this time, our Village gone from strength to strength, attracting lots of new members and helping seniors in our community to learn new skills and enjoy more active, connected and fulfilling lives. And we're not stopping there!

From offering just a handful of activities in year one, we're now delighted to offer a wide range of programmes and activities to enhance wellbeing; from coffee catchups to monthly meetups, informative seminars and interesting outings.

A very special 'thank you' to our founding members, who've been with us from the beginning – and welcome to the many new members who have joined us along the way. We hope you enjoy this selection of photos

from the past five years, showing that, as we mark this significant anniversary, there's plenty to celebrate!



Continued on next page





*Below:* Our Safe & Strong exercise programme has always been popular with members.



*Above and below:* Our members meet new people and make new friends.



*Above:* Our information mornings keep members informed and connected.



*Left:* Fresh air, exercise and conversation in our weekly walking group.



### BARBARA'S STORY:

## "I've met a lot of people I wouldn't usually have met."



A founding member of Virtual Village East, Barbara Davis was at the first meeting to introduce the idea to the community. I thought, "this is an interesting concept – let's give it go!" she says. "I'm not the most sociable of people, so it's been a wonderful way to make friends and meet people in the area."

Barbara, now a member of the Advisory Group, says, "Our membership has steadily expanded and there are now more programmes and activities on offer, like our weekly walking group."

"At first, the concept was aimed at older people living in their own homes, to help them stay independent, yet connected. These days, some of our members have moved into retirement villages and still

belong to VVE – they've already made friends and connections, so they want to keep them up."

Moving forward, Barbara hopes more seniors can enjoy the benefits of our social and support network. "It would be great if there were several members in my street who could look out for each other. That would be my vision."

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 [Facebook.com/virtualvillageeast](https://www.facebook.com/virtualvillageeast)

# Your 'spiritual wellbeing' and why it matters

Ageing can be a positive and enriching phase in life, where you can learn new skills, connect with spirituality, and contribute to others with your experience, knowledge and insights – older really can be wiser!

But what exactly is spiritual wellbeing? One definition is 'expanding a sense of purpose and meaning in life, including one's morals and ethics'. For some, it's about a religious faith, or a spiritual connection to the universe and ancestors. For others, it can be about having a sense of connection, peace, and purpose in your life.

"Spirituality can refer to those invisible but real qualities which shape a person or community, such as love, hope, peace and truth," says CEO, Hilda Johnson. "It's about having meaning and purpose in your life; whether it's volunteering, travelling, exercising, learning a new skill, or spending time with your family. For some, it may be about attending church every week. For others, it may mean learning mindfulness, yoga, or meditation to help you feel calmer, breathe easier or sleep better. Whatever spirituality means to you, it's an intrinsic part of ageing well."

**"Just as a candle cannot burn without fire, humankind cannot live without a spiritual life."**

Buddha

Research shows that spirituality is important to resilient ageing, with numerous positive outcomes including enhanced health and wellbeing, greater capacity to cope, social support, and opportunities to participate in society.

In the context of ageing, the World Health Organisation views spiritual influences – along with physical, social and mental



wellbeing – as inextricably linked to quality of life. Evidence demonstrates that spiritual health can predict both wellbeing and an older person's ability to adjust to the challenges of ageing.

For that reason, we include spiritual wellbeing as part of our five pillars of ageing well, alongside mental and social wellbeing. And we'll soon be developing programmes and services aimed at enhancing spiritual wellbeing for our members in a holistic way – whether it's fostering social connections, promoting cognitive health, or finding new ways to get involved in meaningful community groups.

As you age, it's a wonderful time to explore what spirituality means to you," says Hilda. "And there's no 'one size fits all'. Whether it's attending a mindfulness class, going to church, or volunteering at your local Hospice, take the time to explore ways that spirituality can enhance your wellbeing – and your life – as you age."

# Introducing Virtual Village New Zealand

Great news for seniors around the country ... our local Virtual Village East has been such a resounding success during the past five years, we're planning to expand the concept across New Zealand!

We've set 'Virtual Village New Zealand' up as a charitable trust in its own right, and we're looking at offering a range of activities in other regions – so that more seniors can enjoy a more active, connected and fulfilling life.

Don't panic, our original 'Village' in East Auckland won't change. However, as we grow, we'll be able to bring even more

in-person and online activities to all of our members, including a range of unique programmes which will be exclusive to Virtual Village NZ.

We'll keep you informed once we go nationwide so you can tell your senior friends and family members in other parts of the country. Watch this space for updates!



**You can now register for events online - [virtual-village-east.org.nz/whats-on](https://virtual-village-east.org.nz/whats-on)**

## Events coming up...

› **Seasons Grief and Loss Programme**  
*Tuesday 30 April – Tuesday 21 May (4 weeks)*

- 10:30am - 12:30pm
- HBH Senior Living, 139 Union Road, Howick

› **Movies at Monterey**  
*Wednesday 17 April*

- Time and movie given a week prior

› **Knowing your rights as neighbours**  
*Tuesday 16 April*

- 10am - 12.30pm
- Zoom

› **Mental Health & Wellbeing in Seniors**  
*Thursday 25 April*

› **Mindfulness course**  
*24 April to 15 May*

- 10am to 12pm
- HBH Senior Living, 139 Union Road, Howick

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**To reserve your space please contact  
Ninwa on 021 625 878 or email  
[co-ordinator@virtual-village-east.org.nz](mailto:co-ordinator@virtual-village-east.org.nz)**

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