



Read our CEO **Jonny Wilkinson's** regular column in The Northern Advocate

"A Different Light"

A Different Light - 30 January 2021 – “Hoping 2021 sees the end of Covid, no more falls”

Normally I do a “The Year That Was” for my last column of the year. A sort of summary of the past year. A cobbling together of excerpts from previous columns that year being “cut and tucked” (my PA’s terminology) into a summation of events and topics that seem worthy of mention. But late last year I was thwarted by a simple stumble that turned my memory of December into blur. Yes another fall. Repetitious you may think? Yes but it did have quite an impact, particularly on my ribs, three of them.

It was pleasant, late December, Sunday early evening. I managed to have a spasm which sent me tottering sideways, then into the edge of the kitchen bench, which connected to the side of my torso. While it didn’t hurt that much, my experience immediately told me that I had at least cracked a rib. The thing with ribs is they often don’t hurt straight away - it usually takes a couple of days for the full effect of the pain to be realised.

Eventually after a few days of shouting, groaning and snivelling, my wife took me to A & E at Whangarei Base Hospital, where they x-rayed me and declared that I had three fairly badly broken ribs. I remember the doctor being particularly good at listening when I explained to him that, when you have Cerebral Palsy, pain can make you spasm and that the spasm can increase the pain. This brings on an unwanted poisonous cycle that can get progressively worse. Grasping this concept, he prescribed me with morphine for the pain, and Valium to control the spasms. Hence, I was in no condition to write a column. I was in no condition to write anything or do anything or go to work for the rest of December and half-way into January. I reassured myself by reflecting that, for the most part, 2020 was a year that most of us would choose to forget. A summary of “the year was” may not have been what the Doctor ordered for my readers or myself.

While I remember enjoying the occasional glass of festive bubbles, they also did not help with my recollection of the summer break. A highlight was taking our granddaughter to Kerikeri

for a short break while her parents went to work. As always, she was a very active young girl, cajoling her grandmother into pre breakfast swims in the motel pool every morning.

And then - back at work! Back to reality, back to feeling the increase of the late summer heat and humidity as February approaches and temperatures continue to climb. We are preparing for Tiaho Trust's annual Ruakaka Surf Day on the 13 February and looking for more volunteers to help in the water. What better way to combat the heat! Please contact Tiaho Trust if you would like to offer your support.

I couldn't complete this new year's column without referring to the latest sharp reminder for Northland that the Pandemic isn't over yet. As I am writing, it seems that this South African variant may have been contained. Before I sign off I suggest there is consideration of the needs of disabled people in the event of continued pressure on community testing in Tai Tokerau. The hot elongated process is tough for anyone to endure. A priority line for whanau with mobility permits would be a welcome addition to these pop up testing stations, allowing cars of people with intellectual or physical /mobility issues to be seen in a timely way. Yep, kindness is still a great theme for 2021. Nevertheless, my New Year's wish is that we have seen the last of covid scares up here and that I have had the last of falling over for the rest of the year. Let's make 2021 a kinder one.

Jonny Wilkinson is the CEO of Tiaho Trust - Disability A Matter of Perception, a Whangarei based disability advocacy organisation.