



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

## "A Different Light"

### **A Different Light - 31 July 2021 – “Getting Out There Highlights – Northland Disability Services”**

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Last week the magazine ‘Getting Out There’ we (Tiaho Trust) produce was dispersed Northland wide in the Northern Advocate. It took a huge amount of co-ordination and it’s a good read. It highlights disability services throughout Northland. Not only do we profile 16 disability support organisations but it also contains stories about the people who use their services. It provides a range of different perspectives to disability, from an organizational viewpoint to a personal one and from the ‘Medical Model’ of Disability to the ‘Social’ Model.

The Social Model of disability is both popular and well utilised in the disabled community to articulate the all-important relationship between disabled people and the environment, the community, the attitudinal climate and the society in which they live. The Social Model of Disability does not see disability as an individual problem. It states that individuals are not disabled. They may have an impairment, but it is social environment with policies, practices, attitudes and/or the physical environment, that has the effect of devaluing, stigmatising and creating barriers to participation, and therefore disables them.

The Medical Model sees disabled people as the issue; disabled people need to be made to fit into the world as it is. This way of seeing disability, focuses on the impairment, rather than the needs of the person. It also reinforces stereotypes that create pity and fear. The medical model seeks to fix the disability, not fix the environment that restricts them from fully participating.

Despite its obvious shortcomings, the Medical Model does have its place in the scheme of things. It provides expert and specialised services and supports that can enable disabled people to live lives to their full potential. When the two Models are in balance with a focus on the applied outcome of the Social Model to be “non disabling” whether that applies to an individual or an organisation, the combination is fabulous. Read the supplement and you will see some of these brilliant mixed model approaches.

In the magazine you will read about inspiring people who with the support of others have made their world's less disabling. You will read about Vanassa McGoldrick who has Nail-Patella Syndrome who went from a typist from hell to a lawyer from heaven. Also featured is Graham Scahill, a 90 year old who is vision impaired and worked as a switch board operator and has been involved in blind sailing. Veronique Theberge from Canada also stars. Veronique, who acquired a brain injury from viral meningoencephalitis, returned to her sporting prowess by participating in Adventure Racing. Also profiled is Pauline Sowry a woman with Multiple Sclerosis who is a mother, an accountant and the current President of the Northland MS Society. These are some of the many people you can read about as well as some of the organisations that support them by to going into <https://tiaho.org.nz/tools-resources/>

This year the magazine's theme is "Promoting Abilities" showcasing people with particular abilities as well as their disability in Northland.

This year we will also be hosting the Getting Out There EXPO using the same theme with a slight twist. The "Promoting Abilities" will also have a focus on the benefits of employing disabled people, employment opportunities and training providers. We will be celebrating employers who provide a non-disabling workplace for disabled people at the EXPO on 20<sup>th</sup> August from 10am – 4pm at Forum North. See you there for more inspiration!

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