

A Sense of Accomplishment

AGE CONCERN COUNTIES MANUKAU INC

Have you ever felt frustrated because you don't know how to do something that everybody else seems to have no trouble with?

As you get older and as the pace of technological change increases, the opportunities for these feelings of inadequacy occur more frequently. What to do about it? The easiest thing is to opt out and decide that you've managed this long without using a remote control, computer, mobile phone or latest gizmo so you can continue to do so. But, because technology has changed the way in which we communicate, people who don't keep up, can become isolated very quickly.

The team at Age Concern Manukau Counties is very aware of the loneliness and sadness of isolation. In 2009, they launched a pilot programme in an attempt to make a difference to the quality of life of its participants. The aim of the programme was to teach seniors to text so that they could keep in touch with their children, grandchildren and friends in New Zealand and overseas.

Over time, the workshops have evolved into "Cell Phones for Seniors" with the objective of giving each attendee a working knowledge of how to use the range of capabilities of their mobile phone. The results have been very satisfying with one participant remarking, "A great confidence builder. Just shows that you can teach an old dog new tricks."

As good as this programme has become at ensuring that each person reaches the point where they can successfully use their mobile phone independently, it has another successful twist to it. Because there are so many different types of mobile phone, it became apparent fairly quickly that one-on-one tutoring was going to be the most efficient and effective method of teaching.

Someone then had the inspirational idea of encouraging young people (who you might think were born knowing how to use any and every



electronic device) to work with the elderly. So, the largest group of 'buddies' doing the tutoring are students from local schools. Others volunteer as a component of other programmes, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award or just because they are looking for an opportunity to make a contribution to the local community.



For many, especially the younger volunteers, this has been their first involvement with elderly people and they've enjoyed talking with them and laughing together. Their feelings of satisfaction are summed up by one who exclaimed, "I got to help someone learn something new and useful."



"It was enjoyable when my senior started to learn and it gave me a sense of accomplishment."

Congratulations to the

166 participants and the

186 buddies

so far in 2011