

WINTER 2021

NICE ONE!

**WELLINGTON FREE AMBULANCE
THE ONES WHO ARE HERE FOR YOU**

**WELCOMING BABY FREYA
PAYING IT FORWARD
TEAM RESCUE RESPONSE**



**WELLINGTON
FREE AMBULANCE**
kia ora te tangata

We are the ones. 111



Sarah Lewis

ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE
WELLINGTON FREE AMBULANCE

Since taking the role of acting Chief Executive in January, there has been some great work achieved by the team already. Working through improvements and enhancements to ensure we continue to be here for our communities with the best possible care, in the best possible time, when you need us most.

This year we've been able to provide revolutionary care in Porirua and Kāpiti thanks to the Point-of-Care Testing trial that allows our Extended Care Paramedics the ability to perform on-the-spot blood tests. Adding three new VW Caddys to our

Patient Transfer Service fleet has also significantly increased our capacity to transport patients in wheelchairs to and from hospital. I know these vehicles have been welcomed by staff and patients alike. You can read more about both of these on page 4.

On page 9, we hear from Paramedics Rebecca and David who had to urgently respond when Gerald had a sudden cardiac arrest at his home. After more than 34 minutes of CPR and care, plus five shocks from the defibrillator, it's positive to hear Gerald survived. However, I want to draw your attention to the valuable, life-saving medical equipment that was needed. With your help we can buy new state-of-the-art defibrillators so we can continue to provide the highest level of clinical care.

Over on page 12 you'll see that our Event Medics were busy this summer, providing medical coverage at more than 100 events – see if you can spot someone you know.

Our new Chief Executive Dave Robinson will be joining the organisation at the end of June and I know he's looking forward to working with all our communities.

This winter, please do stay safe, look after yourself and each other and remember we're here with you when you need us. **Ngā mihi.**

SHIRLEY MARTIN

It is with great sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Shirley Martin, former Patron of Wellington Free Ambulance.

From her devotion to fundraising as part of the Ladies Auxiliary since 1955, standing on the streets of Wellington rattling a box for the free ambulance, and all the years she cheered us on as our Patron, Shirley has been a fundraising force for Wellington Free for over six decades.

Working hard on getting the whole community behind keeping the 'free' in Wellington Free Ambulance, Shirley's enthusiasm never wavered.

Shirley passed away on Wednesday 24 February 2021 and her involvement with Wellington Free Ambulance and shaping who we are today will forever be remembered.





WELCOMING BABY FREYA INTO THE WORLD

It was just after midnight when Luke and Hayley called 111. Baby Freya was on her way.

While Paramedics Mike and Andre quickly made their way from Greytown to Featherston, Emergency Medical Call Taker Emma got set to talk Luke through how to deliver a baby over the phone.

Baby Freya was only minutes away.

"The instructions were brilliant. It was reassuring to have someone on the phone with us while the paramedics were on the way," Luke explains.

"Luke was calm so I was calm, I knew he was being looked after on the phone," Hayley adds.

After a couple of contractions, they welcomed Freya into the world. However, Luke noticed that the umbilical cord was wrapped around her. He relayed this to Emma who immediately explained step – by – step instructions on how to safely remove it.

Our call takers are a critical part of the team. The first thing they do is work out exactly where you are and what is happening. They're trained to assist with every medical situation and will talk you through the steps needed to provide care for the patient until paramedics arrive.

Paramedic Mike says Luke and Hayley, with help from Emma in the Clinical Communications Centre, had it all in hand when they arrived – all that was needed was a quick assessment of mum and baby.

The help of Wellington Free on this day is greatly appreciated by Luke, Hayley and their family.

"Hayley and I would really like to thank Emma, Andre and Mike for everything they did for us on the night. It is certainly something that we will never forget and be forever grateful for," Luke says.

Four months on, the family wouldn't change a thing. "I've been in the delivery room for our other two, but being able to play such a significant part in Freya's birth was a cool experience – one I never thought I'd have; it was special.

"And the kids slept through the whole thing. They were beside themselves when we woke them up and introduced them to their new baby sister," Luke says.

REVOLUTIONARY CARE WITH ON-THE-SPOT BLOOD TESTS

This year, we became the first ambulance service in New Zealand to trial Point-of-Care Testing (PoCT). Our Extended Care Paramedics across the Wellington and Wairarapa regions can now perform blood tests, previously done in a laboratory, on scene with a patient.

Extended Care Paramedic Indi is part of our Urgent Community Care team in Porirua and Kāpiti, and says this helps provide additional insight into a patient's health during assessment.

Using an i-STAT analyser, paramedics can test blood gas analysis, lactate levels, electrolytes, renal function and basic haematology, with results available in just two minutes.

PoCT supports our referral pathways and clinical decision making and this can reduce treatment time for our patients. The results can mean a patient is immediately referred to hospital, where previously they may have been referred first to a GP.



“Helping inform our decision making on the best place for the patient, be it at home, their GP or hospital is a significant asset for both staff and patients. We haven’t had this degree of insight before.” says Indi.

NEW VEHICLES INCREASE PATIENT TRANSFER SERVICE CAPACITY



We’re all about doing what is best for our patients and staff here at Wellington Free, so last year we added three 2020 VW Caddys to our Patient Transfer Service fleet, significantly increasing the team’s capacity to transport patients in wheelchairs.

Team Leader Sam says the new vehicles supplement the fleet to double our ability to transport wheelchair patients.

“It means we can take patients in their own wheelchairs, helping improve comfort and saving time unnecessarily transferring patients between their wheelchair and a stretcher,” Sam says.

As these vehicles are three of the newest vehicles in the fleet, there are many benefits.

“Our team take great care of all patients wherever they’re being transported. Having new vehicles in our fleet helps increase our resiliency, reliability, and capacity to care for those who need us every day.”

PAYING IT FORWARD

Over the years, Steph has needed us a few times; once for her step dad who was having a heart attack, when her daughter was injured and recently for herself.

When Steph needed help it was 2am. She was lying on the bathroom floor in the worst pain.

"It felt like agony but I didn't want to bother anyone so I thought I would tough it out. I wanted to see how I felt in 20 minutes; I ended up falling asleep and when I woke up, I felt fine. I got busy with the kids so didn't have time to think about the pain, but I knew that I needed to see my doctor later that day."

On the way to drop the kids off at school, Steph experienced another bout of the same pain and decided to go to the doctor immediately. "Once I got there, the doctor called 111.



"When the paramedics arrived, they were so reassuring and calm, and knew exactly what my kids needed to hear at the time. It's the small things that you appreciate and remember – like letting my kids kiss me goodbye and talking to me about the kids on the way to the hospital. It takes a really special person to be a paramedic and I will always be grateful that they were there to care for me at my weakest point."

STEPH IS ONE OF OUR AMAZING SUPPORTERS WHO IS LEAVING A GIFT IN HER WILL AS PART OF OUR BEQUEST PROGRAMME.

"I want to support those selfless, caring and wonderful paramedics who look after us in our darkest, weakest moments. It's important for me to pay it forward. I know my donation will help save lives and provide care for someone's child, parent or grandparent. It might only be small but it's given with a big heart and enormous thanks."

WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?

To find out how you can leave a gift in your Will, contact our Director of Fundraising Claire Carruthers at claire.carruthers@wfa.org.nz



**ONESIE DAY 2021
SAVE THE DATE!**

Our paramedics are here for you when you need them most, but what do they need? Fit-for-purpose ambulances that are ready to go 24/7.

Onesie Day is on Friday 3 September and this year we need your help to raise \$250,000 to buy a Onesie Day Ambulance!

If you would like to be part of the Onesie Day team and help us keep the 'free' in Wellington Free Ambulance, register your interest to take part in Onesie Day: onesieday.co.nz.

WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON AROUND WELLINGTON FREE?



CO-RESPONSE TEAM EXTENSION. We are excited to announce the Co-Response Team (CRT) pilot has been extended until September 2021. As an inter-agency pilot, involving Wellington Free Ambulance, Wellington District Police and Capital & Coast District Health Board it provides enhanced on-scene care to people in need of an emergency mental health response. **Since its inception, the CRT have attended over 200 mental health related incidents in the community, and assisted in over 900 other callouts.**

HELPING OUT AT CAMP QUALITY. In January, we had the privilege of being invited to Camp Quality New Zealand in the Wairarapa. Teaming up with NZ Police and Fire and Emergency NZ, our paramedics helped provide an exciting and fun-filled morning for everyone there.

More than 60 kids and volunteers had the chance to check out the different emergency services vehicles, test the lights and siren, and even go for a short ride.

Nice one!



THE LLOYD MORRISON FOUNDATION AMBULANCE LAUNCH. Over the last five years, Ms Julie Nevett of the Lloyd Morrison Foundation has not only funded our Heartbeat CPR training programme but also donated several ready-to-go ambulances and last year she launched her fifth ambulance! At an event with her friends and family, she spoke about how proud she was to continue to support our great work.

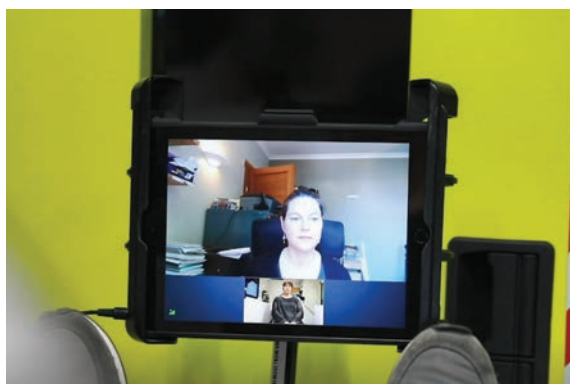
Thank you Julie.

Stay in the loop by going to wfa.org.nz/news

We're a busy little ambulance service providing the best possible care to our patients 24/7, 365 days of the year. But, there is so much more that goes on at Wellington Free Ambulance. Over the last year, we've embarked on some pretty innovative and inspiring adventures. Take a look below at what's been going on.

PIM'S ADVENTURE. Over summer, Paramedicine student and Wellington Free Ambulance Event Medic Pim and his partner, Sarah, took on 1300km of New Zealand's Te Araroa trail to raise much needed funds and awareness for Wellington Free Ambulance and St John New Zealand.

The walk took 60 days to complete and saw the pair raise an incredible \$4,500!

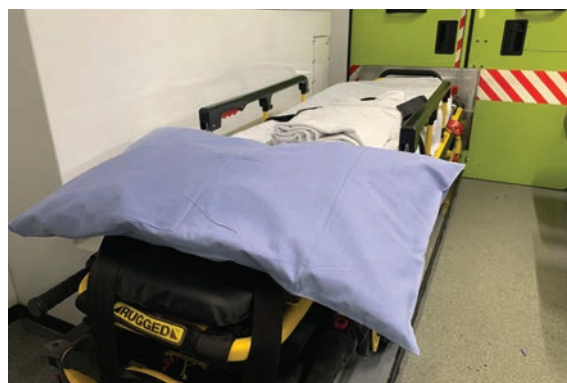


TELE-AMBULANCE TRIAL. Last year we committed to trialling a new model of care aimed at improving the onset-to-treatment time for stroke patients. With video conferencing devices in ambulances, we were able to link patient and paramedics to a neurologist at Wellington Hospital.

The Tele-ambulance assessment proved as accurate as assessing the patient in person, enabling patients to pass rapidly through the emergency department and go directly to CT scanning for further treatment.

BLUE PILLOWCASES. To recognise and maintain the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, our ambulances now carry blue pillow cases to be used under the head of each patient and white pillow cases to be used for other areas of the body. In Tikanga Māori, the head is viewed as tapu (sacred, restricted) and should be kept free from noa (unrestricted, free) in order to provide consistent cultural safety throughout a patient's journey.

Ka pai!



Help keep us free by going to wfa.org.nz/donate

CPR SAVING LIVES IN OUR COMMUNITY

Steve and Diane know how crucial early intervention is to save a life.

Diane will never forget the day Steve went into cardiac arrest. It was a routine morning on their farm in Masterton, and there were no warning signs but she found Steve

unresponsive and immediately dialled 111. After 20 minutes of CPR, our paramedics arrived and took over Steve's clinical care; when they left he had a 50/50 chance of survival. Steve was flown to Wellington Hospital where he spent two days in an induced coma before having an internal pacemaker fitted.

Since Steve's recovery, he and Diane took the time to learn CPR. For Diane, this training was a refresher; for Steve, it was about learning life-saving skills that could help others.

"There are a lot of people who worked together to save my life and get me to where I am today, so if I can learn the skills to help do that for someone else, well that's just great" Steve says.

Wairarapa Heartbeat Coordinator, Matt reinforces how essential knowing CPR is, especially for those living in rural areas. "Sometimes medical help can take time to arrive, and for every minute without CPR the chance of survival decreases by about 10%. Good compressions and the early use of an AED are the most important aspects when treating a cardiac arrest," Matt says.

To book a free CPR session, visit wfa.org.nz/heartbeat



HELP ALWAYS THERE FOR STUART



Living near one of our ambulance stations and having a Freedom Medical Alarm definitely has some perks.

Whether it's the Paramedics across the road or the Call Taker who answers when he pushes his alarm, 89-year-old Stuart has the reassurance that someone will always be there for him.

Stuart has had a medical alarm for five years and says it has come in handy a number of times – with the last in November last year. "It gets to a point where your brain doesn't think it's as old as it is, so it's nice to know help is there just in case," Stuart says.

Freedom Medical Alarms and Wellington Free Ambulance work closely to ensure people like Stuart receive the best possible care in an emergency.

By pushing the button on your Freedom Medical Alarm, this tells us something has happened and you need our help.

We will phone you back and arrange the most appropriate help for you based on what's happening for you. If we can't reach you by phone, we'll make sure your emergency contacts are called and we'll send an ambulance to you.



Stuart has a lot of support close by but he says having a Freedom Medical Alarm gives him and his family peace of mind. "Everyone who has helped me over the years has been very good; both teams – Freedom Medical Alarms and Wellington Free Ambulance – are always on to it. If I ever have anything serious all I have to do is push my button."

Want to know more about Freedom Medical Alarms? Go to **freedomalarms.co.nz** or call **0800 380 280**.

URGENT RESPONSE WHEN MINUTES MATTERED

When Gerald had a sudden cardiac arrest at his home, Paramedics Rebecca and David urgently responded and for 34 minutes, they worked tirelessly to restart Gerald's heart.

"There is definitely a change of pace when you are being sent to a cardiac arrest; it's one of the most serious jobs that we go to. One of the first things that goes through my mind is to make sure all the plans are in place for the best possible outcome," Rebecca explains.

With Gerald's wife, Julie and son, Tim gathered around they all paused after the first shock of the defibrillator was delivered. Gerald's heart briefly started beating again before his heartbeat disappeared. Rebecca and David went immediately back to providing the medical intervention needed.

"I knew Gerald was getting the best possible care and that the paramedics were doing all they could; I just kept thinking 'I'm not ready for you to go yet; you can do this'," Julie says.

Finally, after 11 more minutes of CPR and four more shocks from the defibrillator Gerald's heart started to beat independently. After receiving treatment in hospital, Gerald is now on the road to recovery.

"It has been so reassuring to know Wellington Free Ambulance is only a phone call away and that they have the right equipment and people to handle a crisis situation at any time of the day or night," Julie says.



"I REALLY APPRECIATE WHAT THE FIRST RESPONDERS DID FOR ME THAT DAY. I WILL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL FOR THE ROLE WELLINGTON FREE AMBULANCE PLAYED IN SAVING MY LIFE," GERALD ADDS.

Help us get the state-of-the-art, new defibrillators so next time we get a desperate call for help we can provide the highest level of clinical care. Donate today at wfa.org.nz/donate.

INTRODUCING GRADUATE INTERN LEE

Being on the road definitely has its challenges but Graduate Intern Lee finds it a massive privilege to be in this line of work.



"There are patients we see who, through no fault of their own, often have complex circumstances and fall through the cracks of our healthcare system. Conversely, it's extremely rewarding to know that we can be the point of difference in someone's healthcare journey," Lee explains.

Lee remembers a palliative patient which he and his colleague transported just before they were due to finish their shift.

"The patient was stable but anxious and scared. All I did was talk to them on the way to hospital and asked about their life and family. After we handed over to the staff in the emergency department, the patient held my hand and thanked me for my compassion. It was extremely affirming for me."

Since joining Wellington Free, Lee's enjoyed being part of a team who are competent, passionate and supportive of each other and their patients.

"I think the main thing which I've taken on board that really makes a difference is the ability to communicate effectively and compassionately with our patients. It's been extremely helpful in informing them about what's happening, maintaining all rights of the patient and being a compassionate human; as opposed to just someone in green uniform."

TEAM RESCUE RESPONSE

When rescue Paramedic and Wairarapa Land Search and Rescue volunteer Matt's pager went off earlier this year, he knew his day was about to change.

A patient had fell and injured themselves at the Putangirua Pinnacles. This required a specialist response. Immediately Matt and a team of others responded.

The patient was located along a narrow track; they had serious injuries that required immediate medical treatment and care from Matt.

Together with the NZ Police search and rescue team and using a specialist rescue extrication aid, Matt was able to transport the patient to an opening along the nearby river bed. From here, they were flown to hospital by the waiting helicopter.

Matt says operating at a rescue incident is a more extreme version of working in an ambulance. "In both roles you have to adapt to constant changes in your environment, think outside the box, have multiple back-up plans, and rely on yourself and the team around you."





HERE FOR YOU THIS WINTER

Clinical Paramedic Advisors Hazel, Kristy and Isaac say it's important to look after yourself and keep well this winter.

"During winter there can be an increase in calls related to respiratory illnesses or breathing problems," Hazel says.

"If you are unwell and need our help, don't be worried about calling 111. We'll work with you to ensure the best care, in the best way, and will take every precaution to ensure you stay safe from viruses such as COVID-19 and flu," she says.

Isaac explains that those who answer the 111 calls will ask you specific questions to determine if you need more urgent care, or whether alternative options may be more appropriate. "Depending on your symptoms we may help you over the phone, organise a doctor's appointment or send an ambulance crew to come and see you at home," he says.

"WE ALSO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL VERBAL SUPPORT TO FAMILY; WORKING ALONGSIDE OUR CALL TAKERS TO LOOK AFTER YOU AND YOUR WHĀNAU," KRISTY ADDS.

Staying well this winter doesn't take much. Hazel, Kristy and Isaac explain that one of the best ways to help protect yourself and your whānau is to stay home if you're feeling unwell.

If you do need to go out and aren't feeling well, please wear a mask to protect yourself and others; please also make sure you wash your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds and cover coughs and sneezes.

If you rely on long term medications, especially for things like asthma or are at high risk of getting respiratory infections, contact your doctor now to make sure you have enough medication to get through the next few months.

To keep your home environment healthy and dry this winter, you should also:

- + use a dehumidifier,
- + dry clothes outside,
- + remove mould from walls and ceilings and any condensation on windows,
- + keep your home warm, dry and well ventilated.

**LOOK AFTER YOURSELF
AND STAY WELL THIS
WINTER, WELLINGTON
AND WAIRARAPA.**

HERE FOR YOU, ACROSS OUR REGION

Our Event Medics are here to keep you and your whānau safe at some of our region's coolest events all year long.

Over the last few months, we provided medical coverage at more than 100 events including Six60's concert, Round the Bays, Wings Over Wairarapa, national and international sports games, as well as several community events across Wellington and Wairarapa.

Event Manager Christine says to work with the team and be part of so many iconic Wellington events is a great opportunity for the whole team.

**"WE LOVE CARING FOR AND CONNECTING WITH
OUR INCREDIBLY SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY."**

If you want to make a difference in your community, we'd love to have you on the team. Visit wfa.org.nz/volunteer to see if you've got what it takes to become an Event Medic.



STAYING IN TOUCH

We'd love to share your story with our readers.

If you've got something special to share email: info@wfa.org.nz

For questions or feedback:
Phone 0508 WFA FREE(0508 932 3733)