

Gotta get yourself connected

Faced with a level four coronavirus shut-down it was always likely that Waiheke's best and brightest would put their heads together to make sure island residents can still stay connected.

Emma Morris, Fiona Gregory, and Todd O'Hara from Little Green Dog decided to create a virtual marketplace to put would-be volunteers in contact with those who might need their help during the next few weeks.

The three Waiheke residents set out to ensure that members of the community will be able to access the things they need while in isolation and, with the endorsement of the local board, they created the Waiheke Volunteer Connection (WVC).

This is a database of people who require assistance and people who can offer assistance. Help can range from simple tasks like collecting groceries and medicine, to walking a pet, delivering firewood or just a simple phone call to chat about their day.

Todd said the decision to find an innovative online solution to being kept apart physically during the lockdown came from seeing just how many people reached out to offer help as soon as the alert level four restrictions were put in place.

"People react in a lot of different ways to stressful situations. What's been amazing is the Waiheke community's default response of wanting to help," he said.

"On every post about there being an issue on the community page there were multiple comments of people wanting to help solve it. I could see that people

were ready to step up and assist, they just needed a coordinated way to do it.

"I wasn't content with just waiting out the shutdown from the couch, so I reached out to Fiona who left a comment saying they were working on something and I offered to help however I could.

"What we came up with was a simple database that connects people who want to help with people who need it. I hope that through the work that we're doing now, we can connect our community and bring hope to people who need help."

Fiona said it was only natural for Waiheke residents to reach out in times of distress.

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"Our wonderful Waiheke community has many volunteers and we're a community that supports each other. We know people will want to help during the Covid-19 shutdown, but don't necessarily know how," she said.

"At the same time, people may not know how to ask for help if they are worried or potentially vulnerable.

We hope to connect people in their own neighbourhoods so we can all support each other during the coming weeks."

Emma, who is part of the Waiheke Collective, said the database may be a simple thing to have created but it could have a large effect.

"The key thing is making sure we remain connected, even while we are needing to be physically isolated. With compassion and collaboration we can support our community through uncertainty and change to come out stronger

and more resilient."

To get involved either as a volunteer or if you would like someone to help you or chat with, you can sign up using an online form at tinyurl.com/WVC2020



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