

# Senior Care Connections

Spring 2010

## Disaster Safety Tips for Seniors



Neil Farnworth Co-Founder of Home Instead Senior Care (NZ)Ltd

With the recent Christchurch Earthquake, it was noted that older adults may be among the most vulnerable victims when disasters strike. That's why we are including in this issue of Senior Care Connections, a disaster safety preparation checklist to help seniors prepare for the possibility of natural disasters.

"We know that a disaster can be deadly for some seniors because of physical and other limitations," said Neil Farnworth, co-founder of the Home Instead Senior Care network in New Zealand. "That's why the sooner the better for families to talk with their senior loved ones and begin preparing in advance for any kind of emergency that could threaten their health or safety. Consider this checklist as you help your older adult get ready."

### Home Instead Senior Care's Disaster Prep Checklist For Seniors:

**Tune in.** Contact your local Civil Defence office to learn about the most likely natural disasters to strike your area. Stay abreast of what's going on through your local radio or television.

**Take stock.** Decide what your senior can or can't do in the event of a natural disaster. Make a list of what would be needed if a disaster occurred. For example, if your loved one is wheelchair-bound, determine an evacuation strategy ahead of time. Prepare for whatever disaster could hit the area.

**To go or to stay?** When deciding to evacuate, older adults should go sooner rather than later. By waiting too long, they may be unable to leave if they require assistance.

**Make a plan.** Schedule a family meeting to develop a plan of action. Include in your plan key people – such as neighbours, friends, relatives and professional caregivers – who could help.

**More than one way out.** Seniors should develop at least two escape routes: one to evacuate their home and one to evacuate their community.

**Meet up.** Designate a place to meet relatives or key support network people outside the house, as well as a second location outside the neighbourhood, such as a school or church. Practice the plan twice a year.

**Get up and "Go Kit."** Have an easy-to-carry backpack including three days non-perishable food and water with an additional four days of food and water readily accessible at home. Have at least 3 litres of bottled water per person per

day for 3 days. Refresh and replace your supplies at least twice a year. And don't forget the blanket and paper products such as toilet paper.

**Pack extras and copies.** Have at least a one-month supply of medication on hand at all times. Make ready other important documents in a waterproof protector including copies of prescriptions, driver's license, insurance documents and bank account numbers. Also take extra reading glasses and hearing-aid batteries. Label every piece of important equipment or personal item in case they are lost.

**Your contact list.** Compile a contact list and include people on a senior's support network as well as doctors and other important health-care professionals.

If you can't be there. If you're not living close by to help your loved one, enlist the help of family or friends, or contact a professional caregiving company.

Should you require the services of a Home Instead caregiver to help with preparedness planning then this can easily be arranged and may offer family members living some distance away from elderly parents much needed peace of mind. For further information either visit our website at [www.homeinstead.co.nz](http://www.homeinstead.co.nz) or contact your nearest Home Instead Office.

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# Home Instead Christchurch Lends a Hand to Quake Victims



*Peter Gwynne, Home Instead Christchurch Owner surveying the damage around his local area.*

At 4.35am on 4th September 2010, Christchurch as we know it changed forever when a 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck the city. Whilst it was a horrific experience for all residents, it was especially so for a lot of elderly residents who were alone when the quake struck feeling very vulnerable, without power and water and in some cases unable to get out of their houses to obtain necessary provisions.

The community of Canterbury rallied round in a variety of ways. This included the local franchise of Home Instead Senior Care, with the backing of Home Office in Hamilton, offering the services of Home Instead Caregivers to Age Concern, to assist the elderly in getting back to some sort of normality.

Peter Gwynne, Home Instead Christchurch Owner says, "In one particular case there was an elderly gentleman who was partially blind and bedridden. He couldn't attract his neighbours attention and had no way of getting to emergency provisions."

"At the request of Age Concern, one of our Home Instead Caregivers went to his home, picked up his shopping list, went to the supermarket and returned with the much needed supplies and provided some companionship in the process".

Peter and his wife Lynda who is co-owner, immediately following the quake made a point of contacting all caregivers and clients and although it took up to 48 hours to track everyone down, thankfully there were no injuries and only limited damage to property had occurred.

Neil Farnworth, Co Founder of Home Instead in New Zealand concludes by saying, "Peter and Lynda did a tremendous job in a situation that potentially you would only face once in a lifetime".

"You often imagine what you would do if a disaster struck but the reality is always usually different. In this particular situation not only were Peter and Lynda trying to cope with the needs of their own family during the disaster but also the needs of their caregivers and clients. However one positive outcome that did come from the earthquake was the opportunity that the Christchurch office had to put their own 'Disaster Preparedness Plan' into action and we are certain that this was also a contributing factor for how successfully they have coped."



## Senior Moments

An elderly man, thinking his wife was losing her hearing, went about 20 feet behind her and asked "Can you hear me sweetheart?" No reply. He moved 10 feet behind her and inquired again still receiving no reply. Moving to 5 feet there was still no response.

A few inches behind her ear, he asked "Can you hear me now honey?"

His wife replied "For the forth time: YES!"

# Initial Results Not Surprising for Home Instead's Private Pay Survey



*Pictured above is Kevin Tunstall of Home Instead Senior Care.*

Home Instead New Zealand has recently undertaken a survey to gain understanding from local community groups and organisations who frequently work with seniors, as to what some of the barriers and issues might be when recommending a private pay service for home based senior support.

"We felt this was important given the feedback we were starting to receive from many of the groups we work with," says Kevin Tunstall, National Franchise Support Manager. "Many of these organisations have concerns about the potential for further cutbacks in public health spending,

especially when it comes to the area of home based care which also includes support for the elderly in the form of home-help".

The results of the survey in some areas were no surprise to Home Instead, with perceived 'cost of care' being foremost in most peoples minds when it comes to deciding whether or not to refer someone on for support.

"Approximately 60% of those surveyed stated cost was a potential barrier", says Mr Tunstall. "This was no surprise to us as we do get these comments from the families of seniors who call our office looking at care options. The reality however is that most people are surprised to find that the care we provide is very affordable given we offer flexibility of care and a care plan which can be built around the individual's needs keeping the cost very manageable for all concerned"

Also making things more affordable is the trend toward adult children sharing the costs of a senior parent's care. Home Instead are finding that where adult children are outside a parents hometown but still wish to help then they can contribute financially toward the cost of setting up quality care for their loved one - and where the cost is shared amongst all the family then things work out even better.

Other findings through the survey suggest there is certainly a need for Private Pay

Home Care, with the majority of those surveyed feeling 'very strongly' that this option is needed in addition to the care funded by the government.

"One surprising element from the survey was the amount of organisations seeing seniors needing additional care on a daily to weekly basis, but then holding off referring the senior to a private pay organisation", says Mr Tunstall. "It may well be that the assumption is that the senior can't afford the help but in our experience many can, and do, benefit from a two hour visit each week to provide companionship and some light home-help. Social isolation is one of the biggest issues our elderly face and having regular contact with a caring, attentive caregiver can make a huge difference to a senior and not only improves the quality of a senior's life but can also extend their life span".

In closing Mr Tunstall adds, "Now we have gathered the information from this initial survey we will be using the data to revisit the messages we share out in the community and will be doing our best to educate others towards the benefits of private pay and how the need will not only increase but hopefully also become more accepted as an alternative to government funded care as the decade progresses".

Further private pay survey results will be shared in the next edition of Home Instead's **Senior Care Connections** newsletter.

## Worthy Caregiver Receives \$1000 'Time for Time Out'



In our winter edition of Senior Care Connections we announced we were on the hunt for a worthy candidate to receive a much needed break as part of our 'Time for Time Out' essay competition. After hearing about our competition, Mr Pandelis Dodanis of Hamilton decided he would enter to see what would happen.

After receiving his written submission the judges read about his situation in caring for his 81 year old mother, Marcella, and it was a unanimous decision about who the winner should be. Since 2003 Pandelis (or Deli as he likes to be known) has been primary caregiver to his mother who is suffering from Alzheimer's Disease. Deli explained that without any other relatives here in New Zealand he rarely receives any break from his caregiver duties.

"We arrived in New Zealand in 1966 from Egypt and now there is no one to help me look after her. I always have to revolve around her needs" says Deli speaking of his mother, "It's very difficult for me to have time out easily since I do not have any other relatives here in New Zealand. I always have to try to be patient, positive and have perseverance, be organised and

use a lot of initiative to prompt her and I am very conscientious to ensure Mother receives the best care possible as I am her primary caregiver"

Deli plans to use the \$1000 carefully and is already looking forward to some much needed time out after a visit from Home Instead Hamilton's Donna Reeve, who visited to explain our services and how we can help.

"It really was a great experience" says Donna following her visit to Deli and his Mother, "From the client's I've helped it's hard enough trying to cope with a parent with Alzheimer's as part of a large family who all share the responsibility, but for someone like Deli it must be very difficult. Winning this essay competition will make such a big difference for him".

# Meet Maggie Calvert Our New Remuera Owner

We would like to introduce our newest Franchise Owner, Maggie Calvert, who took over ownership of the Remuera operation in early July of this year.

Maggie, who was born and schooled in Dunedin, married another 'Mainlander' (from Invercargill) and with John moved variously to Christchurch and Wellington ending up, of course, in Auckland. Maggie's university education was garnered in both Dunedin and Auckland - culminating in a business degree.

However, it was John's untimely death 5 years ago which saw her move towards the eventual purchase of a business in the caring field. "Working with the carers who provided such wonderful support for me during John's dying has no doubt been instrumental in my decision to purchase this type of business. I would like to think that I can provide the same service to others as was provided to us during that time", Maggie explains.

Immediately prior to purchasing the Home Instead Remuera business, Maggie was manager for the Northern Region of Lifelink Medical Alarms for 3 years which is operated by St John and this prior experience with senior related issues Maggie feels, was another great help in

shaping her understanding of what some of the needs she and her team might encounter on a day to day basis as they care for seniors within the community.

"With St John I worked closely with all kinds of people in their homes, as did my staff, and we regularly turned up at weekends armed with buckets and mops to help clean some of our clients' houses as well as organise care for them, such were some of the circumstances we came across!". Previous extensive business experience at senior management level across various corporates also stands her in good stead.

Maggie who is supported in the Remuera Office by Angela Harris (Office Manager) decided the change of ownership should also involve a change of location with a move from Meadowbank to a new location in Marua Road, Ellerslie. The parking for clients and caregivers is much better and the new office is bigger and brighter, as well as providing plenty of scope for future growth.

"It's also a great change of location for Angela," says Maggie, "Previously Angela, who spends the majority of time in the office, would be lucky to catch any natural



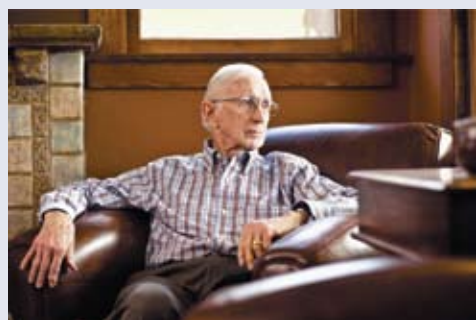
Maggie Calvert, Remuera Franchise Owner

Maggie, who is looking forward to building strong relationships with seniors and their families, community groups and agencies across the area she services, concludes with some final comments which highlight her positive and caring attitude toward others.

"Life is to be cherished daily and if I can help just one other person gain fulfilment and enjoyment from each and every day I feel I will have accomplished something!"

To find out more about the care that Maggie and her team can provide, just visit our website at [www.homeinstead.co.nz](http://www.homeinstead.co.nz) or contact your local Home Instead office.

## Elderly Risk Malnutrition by Not Eating Properly



Many elderly people are risking malnutrition by not eating properly, a recent study suggests.

The study from the Hawke's Bay District Health Board showed 57 percent of over-65s in the region were not eating properly which could lead to a loss of independence or a hospital stay. Out of an estimated 7518 people, a third would be high-risk. Those at highest risk were those living alone or Maori elderly.

Some elderly did not believe they needed to eat as much as younger people, some could not cook or thought it was normal to lose weight with age, the study found.

It said there were three steps to becoming obviously malnourished, starting with having risk factors such as being on a low income and living alone, to having a restricted diet, to "sub-clinical malnutrition", at which point the condition started affecting health.

*Did you know that Home Instead can provide clients with a meal preparation service in addition to the other services we provide? To find out more just contact your local Home Instead Office or visit our website at [www.homeinstead.co.nz](http://www.homeinstead.co.nz)*

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*Each Home Instead Senior Care office is independently owned and operated*