

Blog

ASSISTANT ALL BLACK COACH TALKS ABOUT EPILEPSY



An outstanding coach and rugby legend, Joe Schmidt and his whanau understand what it's like to live with Epilepsy.

Joe Schmidt's son has Epilepsy and Joe is an advocate for epilepsy services.

Epilepsy New Zealand are delighted to share Joe Schmidt's contribution to understanding Epilepsy. We are very grateful Joe was able to take time out from his busy coaching schedule to talk about Epilepsy. See video below to hear from Joe Schmidt:



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At Epilepsy New Zealand we have nationwide educators who provide support and education. Please get in contact with our educators [today](#).
[Donate](#) to Epilepsy New Zealand now to support people living with Epilepsy.

IN MEMORY OF ANDREA HAWKLESS: A TRUE EPILEPSY HERO



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It is with deep gratitude and sadness that we remember Andrea Hawkless – a tireless advocate, compassionate volunteer, and true friend to all living with epilepsy. Andrea's passion for supporting others was deeply personal. After losing her son to severe epilepsy, she continued to dedicate herself to raising awareness and improving the lives of families affected by the condition. As a valued member of the Auckland Branch Committee, Andrea volunteered countless hours to Epilepsy New Zealand (ENZ), helping to run the Branch and lead major fundraising efforts, including the annual Kumeu Wine and Food Festival – a joint effort with the [Epilepsy Assist Dog Trust](#), which she also founded. Through her work, Andrea made it possible for people living with epilepsy to access life-changing assist dogs. Even after ENZ moved to a centralised structure, Andrea stayed in touch and continued her support. Well past retirement age, she remained an inspiring force in the community. Andrea was a warrior for change, a hero to many, and a friend to all. Her legacy of compassion and dedication will continue to make a difference for years to come. Our thoughts are with her family and friends.

TARANAKI EDUCATOR PROVIDING VITAL SUPPORT

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Scan QR code for Regional Educator's Business Card

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Epilepsy New Zealand very much for the ongoing support we receive.

In our class (Te Rangimarie at Stratford High School) there are several students who have seizures and it is vital that our teacher aides and teachers have the knowledge of seizures and how to assist when a student has a seizure.

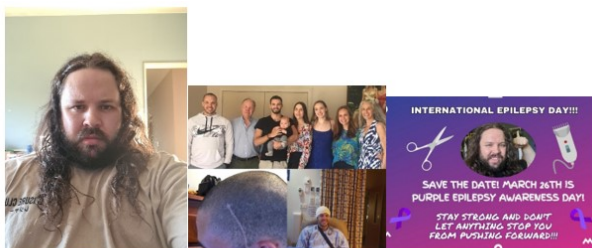
Every year we invite a representative from Epilepsy New Zealand to speak to our staff and this is always done in a professional and informative way. There are handouts to accompany the speaker as well as a PowerPoint Presentation which includes videos and the opportunity to practice giving Midazolam. We use the Epilepsy New Zealand Seizure Diaries for our students and very much appreciate having these.

Our annual visit from Epilepsy New Zealand is a critical part of our staff training programme. This afternoon we had Dianne Darbyshire present to us and we would like to acknowledge her and the support she has given to Te Rangimarie, Stratford High School over the years. We are confident we can support our students through their seizures as a result of the information she has shared with us.

Thank you again

Jeanette Bell, Te Rangimarie, Stratford High School

CUTTING FOR A CAUSE: ALEX'S BOLD MOVE TO EMPOWER PEOPLE WITH EPILEPSY



Alex may have epilepsy, but that hasn't stopped him from chasing his dreams. With determination and heart, he's built an inclusive gym and personal training service to help people of all abilities feel stronger, healthier, and more confident.

This Purple Day (March 26th), Alex is taking a bold step to make an even bigger impact. For



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years, he's been growing his "luscious locks," but now he's ready to let them go. In a powerful show of solidarity, he'll cut off his hair to raise funds and awareness for the epilepsy community – a cause that's deeply personal to him.

"I've lived with epilepsy for 25 years, and I know firsthand the challenges it brings," Alex shares. "That's why I'm so passionate about raising funds for Epilepsy New Zealand. They provide life-changing support, education, and advocacy for people like me. But I also want to do more. I want to offer specialised personal training programmes for individuals with epilepsy, helping them build strength, confidence, and a sense of empowerment." The funds raised from Alex's haircut will be split between Epilepsy New Zealand and his mission to make personal training more accessible for those with epilepsy. He dreams of a world where everyone, regardless of their diagnosis, can experience the physical and mental benefits of exercise in a safe, supportive environment.

By parting with his hair, Alex hopes to spark conversations and break down stigmas surrounding epilepsy. He wants the world to see that epilepsy doesn't define a person – strength, courage, and determination do. Every dollar raised will make a difference. Your support will help fund vital services and create inclusive fitness opportunities for people living with epilepsy.

If you'd like to be part of Alex's journey, visit his [Givealittle page](#) to donate. You can also help by sharing his story with others. Together, we can stand strong with the epilepsy community, raise awareness, and create a world where everyone has the chance to thrive.

Thank you, Alex, for being such an incredible supporter!



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RUGBY PLAYER, TEACHER AND AUTHOR PURI HAUTI WRITES E-BOOK INSPIRED BY SON'S EPILEPSY JOURNEY.



Son's epilepsy inspires children's story, providing positive guidance to those living with epilepsy. Please read more here:

[Prop to publisher: Former rep rugby captain's journey to writing kids' books – NZ Herald](#)

EPILEPSY HERO'S; THANK YOU 2ND WHANGAREI GIRLS' BRIGADE FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE BY FUNDRAISING FOR ENZ.



If you were walking the Hātea Loop recently, you may have noticed some tutu-wearing girls carrying placards and walking with enthusiastic determination. The girls were a group from the local Girls' Brigade, and the walk had a plan and a purpose – to make money to donate to their chosen organizations, Epilepsy NZ and Motor Neurone Disease NZ (MND).

The secondary school-aged girls meet once a week after school, and this year's theme for the Brigade has been "Generosity". With this in mind, Girls' Brigade leader Sue Cammell asked the girls how they would like to show generosity towards their community and it was decided to make money to donate to an



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organisation of their choice. Money-making methods were whittled down to two – sewing heat packs to sell, and being sponsored to walk the Hātea Loop.

Choosing an organisation to donate to was a democratic affair. Each girl researched and offered an idea – these varied from the I am Hope Foundation to adopting a donkey in Syria! However, after a vote and careful counting, Epilepsy NZ and MND NZ were tied for first. This is where democracy really kicked in and it was decided to equally split the proceeds between the two organisations. Sewing the heat packs was a challenge for some of the girls who were not confident using sewing machines, let alone sewing in a straight line. However, twenty were completed and sold. This was a great start towards the generosity goal, but it has been the success of the sponsored Hātea Loop walk that astounded Sue Cammell. Finding sponsors and then following them up after the walk takes time and persistence, but the girls really came to the fore. Over both fundraisers, the 12 teens made an incredible total of \$1027.70 to gift to each of their chosen organisations.

Sue says, “Our girls have learnt and shown that with a bit of creative thinking and determination, they can set and achieve big goals”.

So, with the kindness of sponsors and the heart-felt work of the girls, it seems that real generosity has won the day.

Written by Claire McIvor, 2nd Whangarei Girls' Brigade.

ENZ IN THE NEWS



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No funds for epilepsy monitors leaves Northland solo mum relying on charity.

[News Article](#)

HILARY ON THE RADIO



11 December 2024

Our Southland Educator, Hilary Thorne, sat down with Jack Lovett-Hurst, SOAR Coordinator at Nga Kete Matauranga Pounamu Charitable Trust, for an interview on his podcast S.O.A.R. With Jack!

Tune in to hear their chat on Radio Southland 96.4 FM.

[CLICK HERE \(S.O.A.R. with Jack-11-12-2024\) to listen now!](#)



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