

MISSION OF MERCY



HELP FROM THE HEART: Emergency flight nurse Michelle Baines, from Hastings, caring for Rene onboard a Mercy Ship. PHOTOS/MERCY SHIPS

By Jolene Williams
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People in need of medical attention make their way from all over Sierra Leone to meet the Africa Mercy, the ship where Hastings midwife Anneke Knechtmans and emergency flight nurse Michelle Baines live and work. Once a Danish rail ferry, Africa Mercy is now a state-of-the-art floating hospital that brings free medical care through a volunteer workforce to some

of the world's most impoverished people.

The two Hastings women have been onboard since April and return home next month.

As an admissions nurse Ms Knechtmans is one of the first points of contact for patients, many of whom had been long deprived of basic medical care.

The work differed remarkably from what she was used to, as many of the injuries are were severely advanced

and seldom seen in New Zealand.

Language added another dimension, as interpreters had to translate patients' history from their tribal language to the national language, then to "western English".

Ms Baines works onboard as a shift nurse. She first worked on a Mercy Ship in West Africa in 2009 before returning this year.

She said the job was "an amazing experience" and recalled watching patients line up on the dock, waiting to

be admitted to the floating hospital.

"Each one gazed at the ship with some trepidation, but with hope, and relief," she said. "They didn't know I could see them."

She remembered one patient, a 4-year-old boy weighing 11kg, who underwent major reconstructive surgery on his jaw, refashioned from bone taken from two of his ribs.

Ms Knechtmans initially heard about Mercy Ships more than 20 years ago. "I had the longing to be on a ship like

that and serve some time helping the poor," she said.

"Through the years that my children were at school and at university we could not afford it. Now the children are living all their own lives and supporting themselves."

Patient care was life-saving or life-enhancing, ranging from routine to complex and specialised and was a vital source of medical help for people in Sierra Leone where there was one doctor for every 32,000 people.

The ship operates much like a first-world hospital, with six operating theatres, an x-ray and CT scanner, pharmacy and blood laboratory.

There are beds for up to 78 in-patients, across four wards and an intensive care unit, as well as accommodation for 450 volunteers.

"The atmosphere here is amazing. I'm getting to know some really special people. I like the aspect that they are coming from all over the world," Ms Knechtmans said.



FIRST-RATE CARE: Anneke Knechtmans gives her undivided attention to her young patient, while his mother and the interpreter look on.

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Florida students in culture quest

By Amy Shanks
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From Tampa University in Florida, to a rural primary school in Hawke's Bay.

A group of 12 undergraduate sociology students, ranging from first years to seniors, paid a visit to Pakowhai School as part of a 17-day trip studying culture and ethnicity in New Zealand.

"We choose this school because it's small, rural and has a 40 per cent Maori population," Tampa University professor of sociology Norma Winston said.

"It gives the students a chance to interact with different cultures."

The tiny primary school, which has just 36 students, provides a case

study of how diversity can be a great asset, Pakowhai School principal Brendon Mitchell said.

"We are quite diverse, and we are a good example of how that diversity can be a strength."

The Tampa students have already travelled to the Chinese goldmines in Queenstown, visited an exhibition in Arrowtown and attended lectures on multiculturalism and ethnic diversity in Wellington.

While in Hawke's Bay they also visited Napier City Council.

Next they head to Auckland to attend the Otara Market and plant trees in Mangere.

From there the final stop is Paihia to learn more about the Treaty of Waitangi.



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY: Twelve Tampa University students travelled to Pakowhai School in Hawke's Bay as part of a sociology trip to New Zealand. PHOTO/AMY SHANKS HBT112183-01

Public Notice – planned work on the XT Network

As part of our commitment to deliver a quality experience to our customers, we have a programme of work planned on the XT Network.

The work will take place on Sunday 22nd May between 2.00am & 4.00am in:

- Taranaki
- Hawke's Bay
- Manawatu

From 2.00am – 2.30am, customers will be unable to make or receive calls, texts or data. We assure you though that you will still be able to dial 111, if you have a Telecom purchased mobile phone. Your call will simply be connected through another mobile network. However, we do encourage the use of a landline for emergency calls.

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mobile back on the network. Customers may also experience issues with receiving incoming calls or text messages. We again assure you that all text messages and voicemail messages received during this time will be sent to you as soon as the network re-registers your mobile phone.

Work is always planned during a time that is best for everyone, when the network has very low use. We've done everything we can to minimise the impact on our customers.

For more information visit us online at telecom.co.nz/servicealerts



Charity drive with cheers

It's glitzy, glamorous and all in the name of charity.

This year's Lowe Corporation Rescue Helicopter cocktail party fundraiser will be held at the Hawke's Bay Opera House next Friday.

The annual event, hosted by Hastings Karamu Rotary Club will start at 5.30pm, with a charity auction from 6.30pm.

"The support received from the Hawke's Bay community is essential to the Rescue Helicopter Service," chairman of the Hawke's Bay Helicopter Rescue Trust, Alison McEwan, said.

"To operate the service the trust needs to fundraise \$1 million annu-

ally. Not a small amount to achieve, but one that we can do with the support of the community."

Auction items for sale on the night range in value – from an exclusive dining experience at Elephant Hill, to a painting by Martin Poppelwell, various helicopter experiences, and an ultimate trip to Vanuatu – to name a few.

There will also be raffles and prizes for the best-dressed man and woman.

Limited tickets are still available for \$90 from Thompsons Suits and Greaves Diamond Jewellers in Hastings, Advantage and House of Travel in Havelock North and Amcal Pharmacy in Waipukurau.

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