

## Award for Rangiora Stroke Club co-ordinator

We'd like to send our congratulations to Barbara Matthews, who was awarded a Community Service Award late last year.

As the nomination says, "Barbara has been a volunteer on one type of committee or another most of her adult life, mainly through the Catholic Church. She joined the Rangiora Stroke Club in 1988 and is now the co-ordinator, organising various events, activities and outings."

Barbara says she didn't realise she had been nominated, and modestly adds the award is recognition for the club's place in the community.

She says the Rangiora Stroke Club Membership has grown in recent times, in no small part due to the publicity their Big Splash fund-raiser and awareness event gets.

"Many of our members come by word of mouth and we are chuffed to hear people describing the club as most supportive, very friendly and open to all those who have survived a stroke," she says.

The Big Splash sees several local identities take the plunge in a pool of very cold water, around the time of the shortest day each winter.



Barbara receives her award from Waimakariri mayor David Ayers

"Thanks to the support from the community, Rangiora Promotions, and Bayley's Real Estate we raised a substantial sum for our activities. This has meant that we can now offer support every Tuesday in the month to our members," Barbara says.

Congratulations Barbara, and well done to everyone involved in the club.

### Simon Bradwell

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# PENSTROKES

REDUCING RISKS, IMPROVING OUTCOMES

## Inspiring 'brush' with stroke

Bay of Plenty artist Mike Maynard is a perfect "illustration" of life after stroke.

The talented illustrator had lived all over the world and held art exhibitions in Europe.

One morning in April last year, Mike suddenly felt dizzy and started slurring his words.

His wife Ellie told the *Bay of Plenty Times* she sprang straight into action.

"I knew instinctively there was something badly wrong," she said.

Within 15 minutes Mike was in hospital, where he was to remain for the next three months. He'd suffered a major brain bleed.

On his return home, Mike had ongoing fatigue and balance problems and left-sided weakness.

But he wanted to return to his love of painting and illustration, and with determination and perseverance, succeeded.

Mike is now making a great recovery and has taught himself to paint again – and the results very impressive.

Mike and Ellie want to hold an art exhibition to show in Ellie's words, 'just because you have had a stroke doesn't mean your life is finished. It can be the start of something new.'



## Tips for caregivers

Caring for a loved one after a stroke can be difficult, but with the right information and preparation, you can keep your loved one safe, the American Stroke Association says.

The advice may be from offshore, but the points they make are equally valuable here.

The association offers this advice for caregivers:

- Be aware of the person's medications and side effects.
- Determine if the home should be modified to meet the needs of the stroke survivor.
- Make sure the person eats a healthy diet, exercises, takes medication as prescribed and visits the doctor regularly.
- Many factors influence recovery, such as where in the brain the stroke occurred, how much of the brain was affected, the survivor's motivation, caregiver support, the amount and quality of rehabilitation and the survivor's health before the stroke.
- The most rapid recovery usually occurs during the first four months after a stroke. Some survivors continue to recover well into the second year.
- Consider physical or occupational therapy if the loved one is dizzy, imbalanced or is unable to walk six minutes without stopping to rest.
- Don't ignore falls. Take your loved one to hospital or call 111 if a fall is serious and results in severe pain, bruising or bleeding. If your loved one has minor falls more than twice within six months, see a doctor.
- Monitor changes in attitude and behaviour. Evaluate whether your loved one is having a hard time controlling emotions.
- Post-stroke depression is common, with as many half of stroke survivors depressed.



- Be familiar with your loved one's insurance coverage
- Be aware of your rights as a caregiver, including access to your loved one's medical and rehabilitation records.
- Always take time to care for yourself. Ask friends and family for help.

Source: HealthDay.com

Remember, our Community Stroke Advisors are here to help. They can visit stroke survivors at home, or attend club meetings to talk about ways to improve and access rehabilitation.

You can find more information about Community Stroke Advisors on our website, [www.stroke.org.nz](http://www.stroke.org.nz).

***Is your stroke club doing something special to help stroke survivors in your area?***

***Or do you have a member who deserves special recognition?***

***We'd love to hear about it! Please email [simon.bradwell@stroke.org.nz](mailto:simon.bradwell@stroke.org.nz) with your story.***

## Blood Pressure Van hits the road!

Our Big Blood Pressure Van has been travelling the country, offering free checks which could help save lives. High blood pressure is the leading cause of stroke, so we love helping Kiwis keep safe!

Clockwise from top right: The van features on TVNZ's Breakfast show; our van Health Promoter Laura Stephan gets ready for another busy day; all go inside the van; people queue up for a free test in Marlborough; the van takes part in celebrations at Waitangi.

