

Volunteers band together for island planting

One volunteer organisation in Whangarei has branched out to help another during volunteer awareness week.

North Haven Hospice supported Friends of Matakohe Limestone Island by planting trees on the island sanctuary. The relationship between the two organisations began last year when hospice staff took part in a team building exercise on the island. Island committee member Gerry Brackenbury says staff were divided up into three teams and had a treasure hunt around the island finding things like the kiwi story and special plants.

Last Monday 15 hospice staff, volunteers, and representatives from supporting Bunnings Warehouse and sponsor Meridian Energy, went to the island for the planting day. A kowhai memory grove was planted with kowhai trees being the hospice emblem, says hospice general manager Helen Blaxland.



Image Source: Whangarei Leader

The hospice, which has 380 volunteers, also held a special evening where its volunteers were guest of honour. Mrs Blaxland says as well as helping with fundraising, hospice volunteers provide essential services like driving, cooking, cleaning and gardening for patients in the community. Hospice services throughout New Zealand recently received an extra \$15 million of funding in the government's 2009 budget but North Haven still needs to fundraise \$1.3m a year to cover 30 percent of its annual operating costs, says Mrs Blaxland. On any day there are 140 patients in Whangarei who receive care from North Haven. Meanwhile, Friends of Matakohe Limestone Island is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. Mr Brackenbury says it has several hundred volunteers helping with things like planting and with 8000 trees to plant more volunteers are always welcome.

The organisation meets every Sunday during winter at 9am at the wharf near Onerahi Yacht Club for a barge over to the island.