

# Kia Honoa

Let's Connect with the Cancer Society  
 Canterbury-West Coast Division

## Chris's Story



Chris was initially put on anti-reflux medication and then in January 2020 he had a gastroscopy (where a video camera is inserted into the digestive tract) and a biopsy (tissue sample) was taken from his stomach. The biopsy showed no sign of cancer; however, in early 2020, it was discovered that Chris had a small stomach ulcer at the base of his stomach.

Christchurch man Chris Parata was diagnosed with a rare form of stomach cancer in August 2020. Chris says he first noticed symptoms in mid-2019. **"I was getting stomach pains and acid reflux,"** Chris says.

By May 2020, Chris says that his abdominal pain had become so severe that he had made several visits to the after hours GP clinic. Another gastroscopy showed that Chris's stomach ulcer had grown in size. Meanwhile, he had also started losing weight.

On the 31st August 2020, a CT scan finally revealed that Chris had a rare form of cancer growing on the outside of his stomach close to his pancreas.

**"Being told that I had cancer, that was really hard to take,"** Chris says. **"My head was spinning."**

**"I was in denial – I rang my daughter and her partner and they came down to support me,"** he says.

Chris had surgery to remove the tumour and most of his stomach in September 2020. Following this he received both chemotherapy and radiation treatment.

Chris says the first week of his 16-week course of chemotherapy was all right, but it got more challenging.

**"I struggled a wee bit – listening to music with headphones on helped,"** he says.

Radiation therapy was even harder.

**"Having it five days a week tested my body and my mind,"** Chris says.

**"It created pain, uncertainty and dehydration and I got to the point where I'd had enough,"** he says.

Following a break, four hours of fluids and encouragement from the Radiology nurses, Chris found the strength to continue with his treatment.

**"The last day was enormous – I didn't know if I was going to get through and what the outcome would be,"** he says.

**Continued** on page 2.



### About stomach cancer

Stomach cancer, also called gastric cancer, is a cancer of the stomach. The stomach is in your upper tummy and helps digest the food you eat.

Like the rest of your body, the stomach is made up of tiny 'building blocks' called cells. Stomach cancer begins when these cells grow abnormally.

#### What you should look for:

Signs and symptoms of stomach cancer may include one or more of these:

- a painful or burning sensation in your abdomen
- heartburn (indigestion)
- feeling sick (nausea) and/or vomiting
- blood in vomit
- feeling full after eating only a small amount
- weight loss for no reason
- tiredness or weakness (fatigue)
- black-coloured faeces (poo)

*Having these symptoms doesn't mean you have stomach cancer, but it is important to have any changes checked by your doctor.*

#### Tips for talking to your doctor:

- make a list of what you are feeling and how often it happens, including as much detail as possible
- think about your family/whānau history of cancer and tell your doctor
- go back to your doctor if you don't feel better, even if tests show you don't have a problem – you can ask for a second opinion if you want one
- take a family/whānau member or friend with you to the appointment for support

### Dates to diary



**21**  
May  
Tranz Alpine Scooter Safari, Christchurch to Hokitika



**31**  
May  
Recycled clothing pop-up shop launch event, Rangiora



**1-21**  
June  
Recycled clothing pop-up shop, Rangiora



**31**  
July  
The Mighty Mud Challenge, Greymouth



# Chris's story *continued*

As well as receiving support from his daughter Alisha and her partner Hayden, Chris says he found the support offered by the staff at the Christchurch Hospital Oncology Department and the Cancer Society's Canterbury-West Coast Division "unbelievable".

Chris says having Catherine Dwan from the Cancer Society's Supportive Care team there to talk to has meant a lot to him.

**"You need someone that really understands what you're going through. Catherine understood where I was coming from,"** he says.

Chris also really appreciated having the Cancer Society's Driving Service available to transport him to his hospital appointments.

**"I take my hat off to the volunteer drivers – sometimes while I was**

**having fluids, they would wait for 2 or 3 hours to take me home from my appointment,"** he says.

**"It was a big help and took some of that stress away."**

Chris says that the main challenges he continues to face are fatigue and keeping weight on.

Chris's advice to anyone experiencing pain is to reach out to their GP and ask what tests are available to get to the bottom of their pain as soon as possible.

**"I look back to see what more I could've done, not knowing what was available to me,"** he says.

**"Māori are at higher risk of stomach and bowel cancer. You need to understand what is available if you really need help,"** Chris says.



Chris with Catherine Dwan from the Cancer Society's Supportive Care team

**Sadly, Chris is correct. The incidence of stomach cancer is three times higher for Māori than non-Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand**

## Farewell to Liz

Liz Chesterman has recently retired from her role as Chief Executive of the Cancer Society's Canterbury-West Coast Division. During her 20 years in the role, Liz has successfully overseen the expansion and strengthening of the support services that the Cancer Society offers to our communities across the Canterbury-West Coast region to meet the growing need for support. She has also facilitated the Cancer Society's funding of cancer research and cancer awareness and prevention programmes.



**Thank you, Liz, from your Cancer Society whānau for your amazing contribution to our organisation! We wish you a wonderful and fun-filled retirement.**

## Check out our Relay For Life car!



Our Relay For Life car has a fresh new look thanks to the talented team at Timaru Signs Graphix. You may have seen it parked around South Canterbury over the past few weeks in preparation for South Canterbury's Virtual Relay For Life event on Saturday 14th May.

*Doesn't it look amazing?*

## Bags that make a DIFFERENCE

Recently a cancer patient wrote this message on the whiteboard which hangs in the changing room where those receiving radiation treatment go to get changed into their gowns. The bags are decorated by school students from around our region and are given to each cancer patient to put their clothes in while having treatment.

This message shows just how much the patients treasure these bright and beautiful bags, with some people saying they intend to frame them.



## Meet our new HR/Volunteer Coordinator

Anya Masley has recently joined the Cancer Society's Canterbury-West Coast Division as our new Human Resources (HR) and Volunteer Coordinator.

Anya's role involves working closely with our staff and volunteers across all of our centres, the driving service and our accommodation facilities to ensure we have enough volunteers and to provide them with the purposeful work they are looking for.

Anya says the best part of her job is the interaction with people.

**"I get to assist with and interact with people in our offices and all of the wonderful volunteers across the Canterbury-West Coast,"** she says.

Anya moved to Ōtautahi in February to take up her role. Before that she was based in Auckland and her previous roles were in HR and People and Culture Administration for Rothbury Insurance and Lotto New Zealand.

**"I love Christchurch,"** Anya says.

**"It's true what they say about it being a 20-minute city! I'm so enjoying not spending hours in traffic each day,"** she says.

**"We have friends and family here so it's been a very warm and welcoming transition for us."**

Away from work, Anya says she spends a lot of time in the outdoors, walking and hiking. She is also a keen skier and can't wait to hit the South Island's slopes this winter.



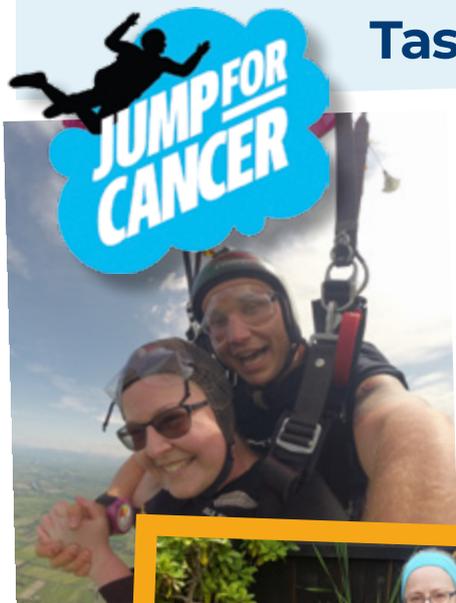
**Anya Masley**

HR/Volunteer Coordinator

If you would like to volunteer for **Daffodil Day** this year or have a general query about volunteering, please get in touch with Anya by emailing:

[volunteer@cancercwc.org.nz](mailto:volunteer@cancercwc.org.nz)

**We wouldn't be able to do the great mahi we do without our wonderful volunteers.**



## Tash to *JUMP* out of a plane again

Those readers who have stayed at Daffodil House in Christchurch while having cancer treatment will know Accommodation Administrator Natasha (Tash) Hurst. What you may not know is that back in 2019 Tash literally "jumped at the chance" to do her first skydive as part of the Cancer Society's Jump for Cancer fundraiser.

Tash describes her first jump as "exhilarating, scary, surreal, amazing!"

**"I felt like I was flying,"** she says.

Tash raised over **\$1,500** in 2019 and now she has set herself another Jump for Cancer challenge, with the target of raising **\$2,500** for this jump.

**"I know the funds are going to a fantastic place. I see daily at work how much these funds are needed to continue the great work that the Cancer Society does,"** Tash says.

This jump will be even more special than her last as Tash is dedicating it to her Dad (affectionately known as Prec) who lost his battle with cancer last year, aged 68.

**"It's almost 10 months ago and not a day goes by that we don't miss him,"** Tash says.

**"I can only be grateful for all the years I had with him and I couldn't have asked for more in a dad. I hope he is proud of me."**

**"My first jump, he was on the ground waiting for me, this time I know he'll be watching over me and protecting me,"** she says.



# Look out, Hokitika!

Look out Hokitika! The Cancer Society's Tranz Alpine Scooter Safari is on its way!

On **Saturday 21st May**, 285 riders on scooters and their support crew will make the journey from McLeans Island on the outskirts of Christchurch to the Beachfront Hotel in Hokitika. There will be frequent stops for fuel and refreshments on the way.

Making it across Otira Gorge and Arthurs Pass on a city scooter is no mean feat and we are in awe of how many people are keen to take up this epic challenge, which is a significant fundraiser for the Cancer Society's Canterbury-West Coast Division.

Good luck and safe travels, everyone!



Image by Lloyd Greenfield



## Charity Golf Tournament in Kaikōura

The Ocean Ridge Cancer Society Charity Golf Tournament was held on Sunday 17th April at the stunning Kaikōura Golf Course. We were supported by locals and visitors alike for the event with 44 teams turning out on the day. Everyone had a fantastic time with great camaraderie, laughs and a little bit of competitiveness!

A massive thank you to all the sponsors, suppliers, donors and teams who supported this inaugural Cancer Society golf tournament in Kaikōura. Their generosity resulted in a truly impressive prize and raffle table and auction items on offer, including Tiger Wood's signed golf glove donated by Steve Williams and Ryan Fox's signed 2020 Tokyo Olympics shirt.

This was a wonderful example of a community-led committee organising a very successful fundraising event for the Cancer Society. The tournament raised over **\$22,000** for Daffodil House in Christchurch, and we are extremely grateful to everyone involved.

# Recycled clothing pop-up shop in Rangiora

The North Canterbury Centre is excited to be bringing a recycled clothing "pop-up shop" to Rangiora in June.

**The shop will be open from June 1st to 21st at the Methodist Church, 176 King Street, Rangiora.**

We would love donations of clean, good quality women's clothing and accessories to sell in the shop. Think retro, glamour or vintage – they could be everyday clothes or something chic or a bit different! And now is the ideal time to declutter with the change in seasons!

Please spread the word amongst your friends, family and colleagues. A pop-up shop launch event will be held on **Tuesday 31st May from 5.30 – 7.30pm** where guests will have exclusive access to shop prior to the official opening. Tickets are available for \$20 and will include a goodie bag, mocktail and canapes on arrival.



**Please contact Tiff on 021-139 4909 or email: [tiffany.wafer@cancercwc.org.nz](mailto:tiffany.wafer@cancercwc.org.nz)** to arrange delivery or collection of donated items or to purchase a ticket to the launch event.



## Your local Cancer Society Centres

**Christchurch Centre**  
97 Fitzgerald Avenue, PO Box 13450, Christchurch 8141  
P: 03 379 5835 E: [contact@cancercwc.org.nz](mailto:contact@cancercwc.org.nz)

**North Canterbury Centre**  
143 Percival Street, Rangiora 7400  
P: 0800 226 695 E: [northcanty@cancercwc.org.nz](mailto:northcanty@cancercwc.org.nz)

**South Canterbury Centre**  
32 Memorial Avenue, PO Box 682, Timaru 7940  
P: 03 688 0124 E: [timaru@cancercwc.org.nz](mailto:timaru@cancercwc.org.nz)

**Mid Canterbury Centre**  
122 Kermode Street, PO Box 296, Ashburton 7740  
P: 03 307 7691 E: [midcanty@cancercwc.org.nz](mailto:midcanty@cancercwc.org.nz)

**West Coast Centre**  
98 High Street, PO Box 81, Greymouth 7840  
P: 03 768 9557 E: [westcoast@cancercwc.org.nz](mailto:westcoast@cancercwc.org.nz)

**Selwyn Centre**  
6B Kidman Street, PO Box 25, Rolleston 7643  
P: 03 925 9708 E: [selwyn.centre@cancercwc.org.nz](mailto:selwyn.centre@cancercwc.org.nz)