

*Since this appeal was first planned several weeks ago we've gone into Lockdown again - we're living in uncertain times. As a charity we rely on our fundraising to ensure we can afford to deliver services. I thought long and hard about whether to go ahead with this Appeal and decided, as an essential service, we had little choice. If this appeal makes you feel uncomfortable in anyway please be assured that I understand and do not want you to feel personally pressured to give. Please enjoy the next few emails that come - they contain great personal stories which you might find an uplifting tonic for these strange days. Cheers, Hans.*

Kia ora!

Wow! We've had a big year so far at NZ Spinal Trust. That Covid thing hasn't gone away like we'd hoped – last year our National Programmes Manager Andrew was busy chasing MoH to get updated PPE guidelines and sourcing masks to send out to our SCI community. This year he's been chasing DHBs to open up access to vaccinations. And he's tenacious – he got Canterbury DHB and Auckland DHBs on board and through our own booking line we booked over 280 appointments. (Huge thanks to the volunteers who dealt with the calls!)

*"BTW, just wanted to acknowledge the NZ Spinal Trust for a good bit of advocacy around the vaccine roll out. I hadn't heard anything until the NZST did its follow up. They rang today to check in on me to make sure I booked in. My normal DHB notification arrived this week, some weeks after I had booked through the NZST contacts and code." - Posted on NZ SCI Group page (FB) July 2021*

And then the Olympics came along ... another Wow! There were many who wondered if the Games could work in this Covid world we're living in. Adding the concept of 'Together' to the usual 'Faster, Higher, Stronger' motto certainly created some stirring moments of outstanding sportsmanship – personally I hope 'Together' remains a permanent addition to the motto.

One of the major stories of the Olympics was that of Simone Biles, the US champion gymnast. This young woman is an outstanding athlete. This was her second Olympics – in 2016 she won four golds. Her record was similar in the World Championships in 2018 and 2019. Her build up to the Tokyo Olympics was right on target. Her country, indeed the world, was expecting great things from her. The pressure must have been phenomenal.

And then this bright, talented, confident woman chose to withdraw from the bulk of her events. The media went crazy! Simone cited mental health issues – and a phenomenon called the 'twisties'. She made the right call for her. Even though she seemed perfectly fine outwardly, at the top of her game, there were unseen issues that caused her pain, doubt, discomfort, dizziness ... caused her to not be able to perform at the level she needed.

You don't have to be an elite athlete to experience this.

I meet people every day who came in to the Spinal Unit not knowing if they'd ever walk again. Through hard work, specialist care and (let's be honest) often a sprinkling of pure luck, they get to walk out of the hospital at the end of their stay. To the casual observer they've 'won gold'.

What's not observed are the unseen ongoing issues that cause them to not be able to live life as they did prior to their SCI. Although they've walked out, they very likely still have bladder or bowel issues. They may still have debilitating fatigue. They may still have enduring pain and, significantly, they may carry a dose of survivor's guilt for having walked out.

What they might not have is a wheelchair – and often that's the only difference between a 'walker' and a 'wheelie' ... the visibility.

So – this year's Annual Appeal is based around the stories and experiences of those who have sustained a serious SCI and yet are walking. We want to highlight some of the issues they face day-to-day ... but also the **winning at life!** moments too.

For Simone Biles, **winning at life!** this year was making the challenging decision - in the face of all that pressure, expectation and patriotic responsibility – to do what was right for her health, her life, her future.

For SCI 'walkers' such as Brett **winning at life!** means getting through the day - managing his unseen chronic pain - with fewer medications so his thinking stays clear.

For Sid it was surprising his whānau by walking out of the Otara Spinal Unit at the end of last year's Lockdown.

The Trust is known for supporting people in wheel chairs. But we actually support people with Spinal Cord Impairments – whether sustained through injury or illness, whether they spend the rest of their days using a wheel chair or they walk out of the Spinal Unit and never need to return ... or anything in between.

The support we provide could be described as quite subtle, almost ethereal ... some people may not realise it's happening. But just like the Olympic spirit it's there and it carries people forward. It empowers them to believe. It is encouragement demonstrated; work possibilities recognised; real life acknowledged; positive futures imagined and lived.

I am so blessed to lead a team of passionate, inspiring, talented and determined people. But I need **your** help to ensure this team can continue to deliver support where it's needed – we currently receive about 20% of our needed income from government sources ... the other 80% (close to \$1m) comes through the generosity of our wider community.

Please will you back my team by donating today?

**Donate directly to our bank account:**

NZ Spinal Trust, Westpac Parklands, **03 - 1597 - 0101190 - 00** (Use your name and 'AA2021' as reference)

**OR click [here](#) to use your credit card to donate**

If you do, your gift will be doubled by the generous team at **Access Community Health** – they believe in our ability to deliver (they've seen it in action through partnering our Whanau Peer Support service) and they're prepared to match *every single dollar donated before September 25th*. So your \$25 donation means \$50 to NZST, \$100 becomes \$200, \$500 becomes \$1,000 ... you get the idea.

Double the impact - Double the awesome! 😊

**Access Community Health** will match up to \$15,000!

Let's go for gold!

Kia pai tō ra,

*PS - Get in quickly to be sure Access Community Health match your donation ... remember the cut-off date is September 25th!*



**Hans Wouters**

CEO

T +64 3 383 6881 M +64 21 226 0481

E [Hans.Wouters@nzspinaltrust.org.nz](mailto:Hans.Wouters@nzspinaltrust.org.nz)

W [nzspinaltrust.org.nz](http://nzspinaltrust.org.nz)

