



RICi trustees with members of the Hope Café team, from left, Janette Lee, Margaret Johnson, Gene Nicolson, Ursula Christel (RICi secretary), Ursula Lang, Lyndsey Edwards (Hope Café coordinator) and Mireille Vreeburg (RICi events coordinator).

Support expo casts wide net

Finding the right help locally should be a little easier next month, when nearly 60 organisations gather under one roof for the Rodney Support & Inclusion Expo.

The free expo will be held at Mahurangi Hope Centre in Warkworth on Thursday, October 15, from 10am to 2pm.

While disability support services will be well represented, organisers are stressing that the event is aimed at the wider community and covers a much broader range of services and opportunities.

These will include family and whānau support, health and wellbeing services, employment opportunities, caregivers and nurses, recreation and sport, therapists, financial advice, funding and grants, community support groups, volunteering

and micro-enterprises.

Among the organisations taking part will be Warkworth Library, Rodney Neighbourhood Support, Māori health and wellbeing services, Kiribati community support, Age Concern, MoneySmart, Warkworth Volunteer Fire Service and the Electoral Commission.

Rodney Inclusive Communities Initiative (RICi) secretary Ursula Christel says people do not need to have a disability or a particular problem to benefit from attending.

The expo could be useful for anyone looking for help for themselves or a family member, people working in the community sector, potential volunteers, or residents simply wanting to know more about the organisations operating locally.

“We are working hard to make this one-day event as welcoming and inclusive to our whole community as possible,” Christel says.

“The Expo is about connecting people with the information, services and community they need to make everyday life a little easier.”

The event comes at a time of considerable change in the local social services sector, including changes to funding, the closure of Homebuilders and job losses among homecare workers.

RICi believes this makes knowing where to turn for help, and strengthening links between local organisations, increasingly important.

“This is about bringing our community together,” Christel says. “There will be

something here for many different people and circumstances.”

As well as information stands, there will be interactive activities, cultural performances and speakers. A quiet room will provide a sensory break, while the Hope Café will offer visitors somewhere to sit, talk and make connections.

RICi is also producing a Rodney Support Directory listing local services. The Warehouse has sponsored a limited print run, allowing copies to be distributed free at the expo.

The event is being coordinated by RICi’s volunteer trustees with support from Disability Connect, Rodney Local Board and Rodney Community Team, Spectrum Foundation, Manawanui and Mahurangi Hope Centre.