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Kapiti Observer

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Thursday, October 13, 2016

Rickshaw rides for retirees

JOEL MAXWELL

Phuket. Colombo. Waikanae.

The town with a median age of 62 has joined the likes of Thailand and Sri Lanka in embracing the rickshaw - but on the Kapiti Coast it will provide pleasure rides for the elderly.

On Thursday Waikanae Lodge receives its first tri-shaw, a variation on the human-powered mode of transport, which is popular across Asia.

The lodge's tri-shaw would see two passengers sitting up front, side-by-side, with the cyclist positioned behind them. The tri-shaw has a motor that can be used to help cyclists with steeper terrain.

It would link volunteer riders from the community with lodge residents who can no longer cycle themselves, but would still like to feel the wind through their hair.

Resident Betty Duncan, 80, said she already took a ride on the tri-shaw before its official launch and she was looking forward to heading out for more.

Travelling by tri-shaw took her back to her childhood days when she cycled with her dad on a bike he made for her himself, to Lyall Bay to go fishing, she said. "I was so proud of my bike, my dad made it out of bits and pieces."

Lodge accounts manager Irini Atuawhanaunga had become one of the volunteer cyclists in trials before the official

launch.

She said the tri-shaw was easy to drive and the motor was not necessary for her, "I don't need a motor, I use my own horse power".

The arrival of the tri-shaw on the Coast comes as newly-elected Kapiti mayor K Gurunathan announced he was keen to see the district become a retirement "Mecca".

Gurunathan said the coast was already known as an attractive place to retire, and instead of keeping the older generation tucked away, he wanted to see the elderly celebrated, as they were an amazing asset.

The median age of people living in central Waikanae is 62 - the median nationally is 38. Waikanae is the grey heart of the wider Kapiti Coast, where one in four are over retirement age.

The tri-shaw is part of the Cycling Without Age concept, which has spread worldwide and started in the Netherlands in 2012.

Lodge owner Arvida is rolling out a tri-shaw for seven of its rest homes around the country.



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Waikanae Lodge accounts manager Irini Atuawhanaunga takes resident Betty Duncan for a ride in the new tri-shaw.

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