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Retirees get back in the saddle

SARA MEIJ

Eighty-seven-year-old Norma Best said she felt like royalty being driven around on a trishaw at her rest home in Richmond.

Best was one of the residents at Oakwoods Retirement Village who got to catch a ride on the new two-seated three-wheeled vehicle.

The village bought a trishaw as part of the Cycling Without Age programme, which aims to get elderly or disabled people back onto a bike and out in their community.

The trishaw is a bike with a two-seats at the front, the cyclist positioned behind them and a motor to provide a boost on steeper terrain. Oakwoods resident Beryl White, 96, said she was very excited about the ride in the trishaw.

“This is just lovely.” White’s neighbour Jill Holland, 76, said she would love to go for a ride in Isel Park. She said the ride around the village was fun and the best part was feeling the air on her face.

Cycling Without Age co-

founder Dorthe Pedersen said the idea was to provide bike rides for the elderly to specific places they’d like to go to such as the beach or a park or just a ride around the area.

Pedersen said the not-for-profit organisation was focused on the goal of helping one billion people

around the world to “enjoy the wind in their hair”.

“It sort of builds the bridge between the community and the [retirement] village [and] it builds bridges between generations.

“And the community realising this village is also part of us and vice-versa.”

The organisation was originally founded in Denmark in 2012 by Ole Kassow who wanted to help elderly people get back on their bicycles and found a solution in the trishaw.

Since then, the concept has been rolled out to 27 countries around the world, including Argentina, Germany, the Netherlands, Singapore and the United Kingdom.

Arvida Group, which runs Oakwoods and several other retirement villages, has bought eight trishaws after trialling them last year in for care facilities around the country.

Arvida general manager marketing and sales Tristan Saunders said the bikes cost just over \$10,000. Saunders said Arvida was trying to challenge the way aging was treated at their retirement villages and thought the idea of bike rides was a great one.

He said community volunteers were needed to bike the residents around the area. Volunteer can email Saunders at tristan.saunders@arvida.co.nz.



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Pilot Trevor Higgs cycles Beryl White, left and Norma Best around Oakwoods Retirement Village in Richmond. Arvida which runs Oakwoods has brought the Cycling Without Age bikes and concept to New Zealand.

MARTIN DE RUYTER