

Sight-restoring operation earns Rotary's top honour

By Joelle Dally

ACASHMERE rotary club has awarded a Paul Harris Fellow to a doctor who performed eye surgery on a virtually blind Fijian-Indian man free of charge.

Christchurch West Rotary Club president Des Buckner presented the fellow, the highest honour that can be awarded by a rotary, to ophthalmologist Dr Malcolm McKellar late last month.

"He gave totally of his skill and expertise for nothing," Mr Buckner said.

Dr McKellar said the award came as a total surprise.

"I know it means a huge amount to the Rotarians, so it was a huge honour," he said.

The club first heard about Ashvin Kumar, 27, when members Ron Birch and Gordon Hooper went to Fiji on a 'rotahomes' project building houses in Mr Kumar's village.

He was suffering from a degenerative eye disorder called keratoconus.

Finding him a likeable young man and moved by his predicament, they rallied the group to raise funds and fly him to New Zealand to have a special contact lens implanted in his eye.

Dr McKellar, along with anaesthetist Sharon King, operated free of charge. St George's



A jolly good fellow: Ophthalmologist Dr Malcolm McKellar (right) with Ashvin Kumar (back) and Cashmere Rotarians (left-right) Gordon Hooper, Des Buckner and Ron Birch.

Hospital also gave a discount for the use of their theatre.

Mr Kumar recently returned to Christchurch for a check-up with Dr McKellar, who said his recovery was going "stunningly" well.

"It is a fantastic result. His peripheral vision was pretty horrible, and he looked pretty

awful with his thick glasses. Now he sees pretty much as well as we do," he said.

Mr Kumar he said it "felt great" to have his vision restored.

"It's much better than my glasses," he said.

My mum's really excited about this...now she keeps telling me to get married!"

» Briefing

Library opening delay

THE REOPENING of the Spreydon Library has been delayed until next month, due to manufacturing hold-ups. The facility closed at the end of August to undergo a major refurbishment, which was envisaged to take three months. Christchurch City Libraries manager Carolyn Robertson apologised for any inconvenience caused by the delay, but said that there was always a risk with a project of this nature. She said a week of festivities was planned from February 18 when the library reopened.

Upgrade for school

ADDINGTON SCHOOL'S junior department is getting an interior upgrade during the holidays to make the classrooms brighter and more modern. The work will continue into the new school year, but class disruptions are only expected for the first part of term one.

More volunteers

CHRISTCHURCH Riding for the Disabled Association needs more volunteers for a few hours a week between 9am and 3pm Monday to Friday during school terms. There will be opportunities to work with horses, assist riders, learn new skills and enjoy working with a great team of volunteers. RDA is based at Canterbury Show Grounds, 61 Wigram Rd. Please phone Annette, 327 7451.

Scrubbing graffiti no joy for 84-year-old

By Joelle Dally

BECKENHAM resident Trevor Brown is sick and tired of scrubbing out graffiti from his fence.

He said taggers have targeted his fence five times since he moved into the area.

"I put up with it for seven years and I'm getting sick of it," he said.

The most recent spate in mid-December left blue, black and red paint all over his white wall, as well as a number of other residences nearby.

He told *Community News Observer* it took him with two others about two hours of scrubbing and cost him \$108 in graffiti remover to get it off.

"I have tried to remove it with turpentine and detergents but you can't really get it all off ... I was only one of about 12 that copped it that night," he said.

He said if he were to repaint his whole wall he would likely invest in some anti graffiti paint.

"It's wilful damage. They might think it's funny but it's not funny spending hours rubbing it off. I'm 84-years-old and

» Have your say

■ How can the outbreak of graffiti be stopped and what should happen to those who are caught defacing our city. Email reporter Joelle.Dally@starcantebury.co.nz or write to PO Box 1467, Christchurch. We will only publish your first name.

it's hard work rubbing," he said.

Grffiti removal in the southern suburbs topped the charts in service requests to the city council for last year, with the Spreydon-Heathcote and Hagley-Ferrymead wards accounting for more than 45% of those reported citywide.

In the Spreydon-Heathcote ward alone there were more than 300 more requests last year than in 2006.

The situation in Hagley-Ferrymead was much the same with an increase of more than 240.

And its removal costs rate-payers about \$1 million every year.

Spreydon-Heathcote Community Board deputy chairman Chris Mene said the

solution was in the community already.

"There are a lot of people in our community who do care about it and paint out tags. It's a small number of young people ... as citizens we need to be vigilant and take ownership of our own patch. Look after your own place first and look after your neighbours," he said.

The city council launched a citywide Graffiti Removal Volunteer Programme in May last year following a six-month pilot run by the Phillipstown Strengthening Communities Project. There are currently about 70-80 volunteers registered citywide.

The project is part-funded by the Hagley-Ferrymead Community Board, and chairman Bob Todd said the board would also support any similar projects that emerged in the area.

"It (graffiti) is a real problem. You've only got to drive around to see the amount. It is most annoying and we shouldn't have to suffer what is happening," he said.

He said the only way it would be overcome was if residents who saw people tagging phoned the police straight away.



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