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THE FRIENDSHIP BENCHES

During winter when there was no croquet to play, I listened to a conversation between Kim Hill on National Radio and Dixon Chibanda from Zimbabwe. I have a continuing interest in this country as I lived there during the 1970s and have visited there a few times since.

Zimbabwe is a country with much strife in its past, its present, and probably in the future. Dixon Chibanda is a psychiatrist and in a country of 12 million people there are only two psychiatrists there. He recognises historical and existing trauma amongst his clients: historical from the bush war, HIV and malaria deaths, then the killings led by Mugabe. These were followed by the clearances of the early 2000s, that deepened the existing problems of the shortage of food, money, work, health and education services.

Chibanda has developed a system of relieving some of the depression of his patients through recognising the strength of community grandmothers who listen without judgement. These conversations take place on The Friendship Benches. There are now about 70 of these spread through the country, which are probably made of wood and placed in the shade of a tree with little kids and chooks running around.

He chose the grandmothers because many families still have them, whereas the men have died through fighting or because of aids. He reckons that men are too keen to provide solutions, whereas the strength of the system comes through allowing the troubled ones, *the ones who think too much*, to produce their own answers. The women of The Friendship Benches receive some training about the questions to ask. Their clients are probably members of their own communities so they know each other's families and speak the same language. The solutions may include finding ways to look after a sick child, setting up a business to buy food, getting books for the kids to go to school or how to treat their livestock.

On reflection, this is what we do at U3A through our many different activities. We talk about books, philosophy, and gardening. We sing, recite poems and stories, and make music. We listen to each other. For me, U3A has been great for learning new skills and giving me a network of friends. Long may this continue.



Alison Bayly, Chair of Tawa U3A Management Committee

Our appreciation and thanks to the following people:

1. **Shirley Williamson**, who wrote to the U3A committee in October.

Just to let you know officially that after nearly 20 years, at the end of this year, I am retiring as Leader of the Garden Group. I have thoroughly enjoyed leading the group and have lovely memories of the people that I have met, and the gardens and bus trips taken. I have tried to get a variety of speakers, competitions and outings to suit all tastes. It all started when I retired as Secretary at Parliament and was then approached to take over the group.



Shirley



Sally

2. Shirley has been ably assisted by **Sally Horan** in her role as Coordinator of the Garden Group for the past decade.

With the retirement of Shirley and Sally, the Garden Group is looking for a new leader or leadership group for next year. If you would like to help out, or know of someone who might assist, please contact Alison Bayly.

3. **Margaret Herbert**, leader of the Botany Group has brought a wealth of knowledge and expertise to this task. Her qualifications in Laboratory Science and Horticulture, along with her membership of the Wellington Botanical Society and a love of the native bush have made her a much valued leader of this U3A Botany Group for the past 16 years.



Margaret

Gil. Roper will lead the Botany Group next year.

4. **Jasmine Thompson** will complete her term of leading the two WRITE IT! Groups who meet fortnightly in the library. She has a seemingly inexhaustible list of topics on which she challenges members to write about. Her own efforts, particularly at the 'mystery' genre gives rise to much debate and discussion.

WRITE IT! will be offered next year subject to new leadership.

Two committee members are finishing their term of service this year and their roles are warmly acknowledged.



Jasmine

5. **Alan Martin** joined the committee in 2017 and initially took on the role of Venues Coordinator, later adding Catering and Meeting setup.



Alan

6. **Jancis Potter** has handed over the role of Courses Coordinator to **Pat Hammond** with the publication of the 2021 Course Booklet. With that she has resigned from the Committee which she first joined in 2012. We are thankful that Jancis will continue on with her leadership of the Choir and Performance groups In 2021.



Jancis

Other important people

7 and 8. We also want to say 'thank you' to our long-serving leaders who are taking a sabbatical in 2021. **Lindis** and **Jeanette Taylor** with Opera and **Carolyn Marshall** with Reading Shakespeare. Both Lindis and Carolyn are specialists in their own fields.

LUNCH AND ANNUAL MEETING 2021

The start-of-year lunch and Annual General Meeting will be held on Monday 18 January 2021 in the Tawa Bowling Club, Davies Street.

A pot-luck lunch will be served from 12.00 noon.

PLEASE BRING A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE LUNCH

Items should be suitable for being eaten as finger food. It would be appreciated if you could bring savoury rather than sweet food. When you arrive, your contribution will be transferred to platters and be heated in the kitchen as required. Members with special dietary requirements may bring whatever foods they need or prefer.

We will be needing help in the kitchen at this meeting to set up and clear up after our shared lunch. Please contact Alison on 027 437 9215 with your offer.

The Annual General meeting will follow lunch and start at 1.00pm.

At the conclusion of the AGM there will be a presentation of the courses offered by U3A Tawa in 2021.

Your U3A Membership for 2021

Do you need help with your membership enrolment? The Bowling Club doors will be open from 11am. Annual memberships can be paid at the meeting. If you are unable to do internet banking, help will be available from committee members to facilitate this process.

Thanks for the use of venues in 2020

U3A Tawa wish to acknowledge the use of the following venues in which our courses and groups have met this year.

Tawa Community Centre, Linden Social Centre, Mervyn Kemp (Tawa) Library, Emmaus Centre in St Christopher's Anglican Church, Tawa Baptist Church, Tawa Union Church, Tawa Bowling Club, Sprig and Fern Tawa, Revolve Fitness Tawa.

And most importantly, the homes of members!

Importance of U3A Tawa

In her introductory article on page 1, entitled **The Friendship Benches**, Alison identified the importance of learning new skills and the camaraderie opportunities that U3A provides. These characteristics are well-identified through some of the following activities of the Botany Group.



What tree is that says Jonathan?



Khandallah Park in full sun after sharing a walk.



'Faith and Co, Café, Petone provided a warm location after a talk by Graeme Lyon on the restoration of vegetation along the Petone foreshore and exposure to the southerly wind.

Did you know?

In 2021, U3A Tawa will celebrate 25 years since it commenced in 1996. We are planning our silver jubilee celebrations at our mid-year meeting.

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Disclaimer: This newsletter is created for the interest of Tawa U3A Inc's membership only. The writer and the executive make every effort to ensure that the information it contains is correct but take no responsibility for any inadvertent errors that might appear.