



Celebrating the community of Hamilton East

Local lives – Chris Rollitt

IF you want to catch up with Chris Rollitt, you really have to find him in situ – at work at The Cook. I find him coiling up a long extension cord and we grab a table close to open windows. The lunch crowd has left and the afternoon crowd is trickling in.

Chris's maternal great-grandparents hailed from Ireland and his paternal grandparents came here from England before WW11. His parents were dairy farmers in Te Aroha and later Paeroa. Chris was the first of three children, making his appearance at Te Aroha in 1965. Schooling was at Netherton Primary and Paeroa College. Chris says he was good at school, leaving at the end of the sixth form with UE accredited.

He completed a Certificate of Agriculture at WTI (now WINTEC) before working with his dad for a year. A move to Hamilton saw him working in clubs and pubs as a DJ and beginning a long association with the hospitality industry. He gleefully describes this as a lifestyle choice and much enjoyed the social side of the work, the music and parties. Chris moved into the management side of pubs, at Zaks then at The Club. He was something of a night owl in those days: he says the money was reasonable and there were parties every night.

Over time, his interest palled a little and he left for Sydney. Chris found a job as a band booking agent. When I asked him how he managed this he replied, "I marketed myself aggressively and used the truth sparingly."

For two years he booked bands on the Australian circuit and in his spare time he went to watch more bands. Chris has managed to combine work with play in a way most of us are bound to envy.

In 1992, he returned to Hamilton and lived in Claudelands, starting his own Booking



Chris Rollitt

Agency, "Total Entertainment." This focused on hotels and corporate functions with a few festivals and weddings. He also organized celebrity speakers and quiz shows. He sold the business to Ian McCook and bought a courier run for a total change of pace. A year on he moved on to work in operations management for Mainfreight which lasted another year.

In 1995, Chris bought a half share of the Eastside Tavern in Clyde St with his partner, John Milne. The pub catered to University students, sports fans and locals. In 1997, Chris and John also bought the lease on Lock, Stock and Barrel in 1997 as well as

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managing the University Pavilion Bar. The lease on The Eastside expired in 2000.

In 1998, Chris's wife, Jane, walked into the Eastside with a friend who happened to be Chris's sister. The girls were both nurses. Chris and Jane married on 7 January 2000 (points for remembering the exact date!) and have since had two children; Sophie born in 2005 and Abby born last year (and yes, he does know the exact dates they were born).

In September, 2001, Chris and Jane bought a twenty year lease for "The Cook" in Cook St, one step away from being demolished at the time. They wanted a pub with a good location, plenty of parking and a "wow" factor (the high ceilings and historic feel).

They negotiated a reasonable rent in return for refurbishing the place. The Cook was previously a Buffalo Lodge and has had many incarnations including a soap factory. The history of the pub is hung inside along with old photos ferreted out by Jane from junk shops: others came from the museum or locals. Matai floorboards were unearthed beneath the hardboard and carpet. Jane used to run the kitchen before having the children.

Monday nights are Trivia nights which are very popular with locals. The second Thursday of the month is comedy night. Chris reckons the huge success of New Zealanders "Flight of the Concorde" has had a big influence on the comedy scene with many comedians incorporating sing-

ing and playing instruments into their acts. There are jazz and Irish nights too with bands including Hair of the Dog and the Dodgy Boys. St Patrick's Day is a big night. Chris says about eighty per cent of patrons are regulars compared to a much lower number for bars in town. As I am fond of saying to English people, "The Cook is as close to a local as you'll get in New Zealand."

They don't really cater to younger patrons. Chris says their success is due to "continuity of good acts and a strong, regular clientele. We are busy all through the year." Living close by in Fox St allows him to spend time with family in the afternoons whilst Jane and the children can reciprocate with visits to The Cook.

In his spare time, Chris was a boat driver for water ski racing with the NZ Ski Assn, owning his own ski boat until last year. He is Chair of HEVBA (Hamilton East Village Business Assn) which is presently in hiatus as well as a member of HECT (Hamilton East Community Trust). Meetings for HECT are often held at The Cook to keep Chris on board.

Chris plans to keep doing what he is as long as he enjoys it. When I ask him for his personal philosophy he says he doesn't have one but, when pressed, says "Just enjoy what you do."

He claims "I've been lucky. I've met really good people and had some good opportunities. I've taken a few punts – some lucky, some not." He thinks Hamilton East is the city's best kept secret with a village feel where people know each other. "It is a two minute walk to the CBD, the park, river, heritage trail, and gardens. It is important to keep its identity but there also needs to be change or things end up stagnant."

Youth Scene



KIA ora whanau,

He mihi nui ki a koutou.

Welcome to the first edition of the Eastside Community News for 2008.

I hope you have had a good holiday break and have been enjoying the spectacular, and very hot, weather that we have been experiencing lately.

My holiday was topped off by a fantastic day at the Big Day Out and rocking with thousands of others to the great sounds of Rage Against the Machine and Shihad. What a day!

What's happening in our community? The first school term for 2008 begins between Tuesday 29 January and Thursday 7 February. Contact your local school for more specific details as start dates vary between schools. Also heads up for the usual traffic issues that happen between 8.30-9am, and 3-3.30pm. Please drive safe around our schools.

Dates for our quarterly 2008 Hamilton Youth Sector Network meetings, Hui Whakapiri, are Fridays 14 March, 13 June, 15 August and 21 November. Held at The Hamilton City Council Reception Lounge between 10am-12pm these meetings are a good chance to network and find out about the local youth sector. If you are a local youthworker or want to be involved you can contact the Waikato Youthworkers Collective for information and advice. Contact Mike on 07-859 2571 for more information.

Waikato Youthweek 2008 will be held between Saturday 26 April and Friday 2 May. For information about events and activities, or if you are interested in running an event contact Mike



By Mike Rarere, Southeast Hamilton Youth Advisor

07-859 2571.

Capoeira for Youth is a free programme held weekly on Wednesdays from 6.30pm. Capoeira is an exotic Brazilian Martial Art that combines music, singing and self-defence. For more information contact Mike 07-859 2571.

Local Youth-Focused organisations include Te Ahurei a Rangatahi Ph.07-8383013, Whaimarama Youth Connex and the Youth Transition Service Ph.07-8382558 located in the central city, and The Hub Community Youth Trust Frankton Ph .027-4722559, provide a range of services supporting local youth including youth groups, counseling services, jobs and training information, and camps. For more information about these services, contact the organizations on the phone numbers provided.

So what else is happening locally? Local events include, the WEET-BIX Tryathlon held

at the University of Waikato on Sunday 10 Feb 2008. Incredibly this is the world's biggest sporting event for kids and is held in seven centres throughout New Zealand. For more information contact Weetbix on 0800 100 257.

For Cricket fiends, on Tuesday 12 Feb 2008 @ Seddon Park Hamilton, the Blackcaps play England in a one-day cricket international. The match starts at 12 noon and for more information contact 07-839 3738.

The Australasian Pro Wakeboard Tour comes to Hamilton on Friday 15 February to Sunday 17 February 2008. Being held on the mighty Waikato River, between Victoria Bridge (Bridge St) and the Claudelands Bridge. This is a great chance to see some of the worlds best and most extreme wakeboarding (and it's free to view!). For more information contact Tony 07-889 4382.

Also on this same weekend at the Claudelands Event Centre (Sunday 17 Feb, 10am-2pm) is AUTOHOP2008. Featuring classic and collectable cars, hotrods, motorbikes and much more. A great family day out, contact Robyn Richardson for more information 07-8591423.

The Hamilton Gardens Summer Festival runs from Friday 15 Feb to Sunday 24 Feb here in Hamilton East. With a great variety of entertainment and acts, you can find out more by visiting the website www.hamiltongardens.co.nz or contacting Alana MacKay 07-859 1317.

For more information or advice please call Mike Rarere, Southeast Hamilton Youth Advisor (07) 8592571 or 021315469.

Kia ora.

COURSES AND ACTIVITIES TERM 1, 2008

YOGA

Samadhimurti, Arbana Levande, is running two yoga classes this term. Beginner's Yoga is on Mondays from 11.45 – 1.15 and Progressive Yoga is also on Mondays 1.15-2.45pm and cost \$36 for 7 weeks starting on 11 February. Min: 6 Max: 9

CRAFT FOR KIDS

Classes are on Tuesdays at 3.45pm from 12 February. \$20 per term. Min: 6 Max: 12

Tutor: Billie-Marie Neal

TAI CHI

Tai Chi will run on Wednesdays from 13 February at 2pm. There is a \$2 charge per class. The tutor, Eddie Tan, has been teaching Tai Chi for over 30 years and is a member of the New Zealand Tai Chi Association.

ORGANIC GARDENING WORKSHOP

The Hamilton Permaculture Trust is offering another Organic Gardening Workshop. This will run for four weeks from 5 March on Wednesdays from 10am to 12noon. Koha appreciated. Enquiries to Cheryl on 834-2249.

BOOK CLUB

The Book Club meets once a month at a member's house in Hamilton East. If you are interested in joining a book club, phone the co-ordinator, Anne Minkhorst, on 856-8531

GLASS PAINTING

Manal Osman is offering this six week course again this term. Starts on 14 Feb and costs \$30. Classes will run on Thursdays from 10.30am -12.30pm.