

The Wanaka Sun, July 6 2017

LINK UPPER CLUTHA CONNECTS WITH COMMUNITY

By Glenda Turnbull

A connection café drop-in session hosted by LINK Upper Clutha was held at Cinema Paradiso last Friday June 30.

LINK Upper Clutha (LINK) – formerly the Upper Clutha Community Development Scheme – is a locally-driven, central government-funded entity focused on connecting people, organisations and infrastructure to ensure a united approach to community development and social and economic enterprise.

LINK Facilitator Kathy Dedo said around 20 people attended, representing a wide variety of groups including Hawea Neighbourhood Support, Wanaka Community Board, Friends of Allenby Park, Penrith Park residents group, Guardians of Lake Hawea, Hawea Youth Club, the Time Bank, Don't Chuck Your Muck, Volunteering Central, and Community Networks. The session enabled groups and individuals to meet and network in an informal setting and to access information, resources, and advice.

“Several individuals came along because they wanted to talk about the impact of the region’s growth and the changes they’ve seen. Wanting to protect our natural environment and connection among locals were high on their wish list. There was talk of how to contribute to the upcoming 10-year planning process, as explained by Wanaka Community Board member Quentin Smith,” Kathy said.

Other people brought specific ideas for community-connecting projects.

“A couple of examples of specific projects were local woman Jeanette Forrester who would like to connect newly-arrived foreigners living or visiting here with native English-speaking locals, in order to support the newcomers’ language skills. The Hawea Youth Club shared that it is pleased to see local youth connecting with each other in its Friday night sessions,” Kathy said.

Kathy said attendees valued the opportunity to share their perspectives on how growth is affecting their communities.

“We had a great group discussion as well as individuals connecting in conversation,” Kathy said.

LINK made available resources like the "Guide to Organising a Neighbourhood Get Together", the LINK 3 Questions Survey results and useful tips for recruiting and retaining volunteers. Questions were answered about forming a community or residents association, including the potential to access QLDC funding for these. During the meeting, plans were also made to follow up with groups that were looking for specific support.

This included the Wanaka Timebank which is just relaunching its time and skill trading organisation.

“The session gave people the opportunity to connect with others in a way that they hadn't before, and to talk about their work and efforts in their communities.”

Liz English from Hawea Neighbourhood Support said, "it was great to meet other people to find out what's going on in our communities and see what resources we can share and how we can support each other. I really enjoyed meeting Sarah Millwater from the Hawea Youth Club, putting a face to the name of someone I had been chatting to online."

The next LINK Connection Café will be on Friday July 28 at Cinema Paradiso from 10:30am till 12:00pm.