

25th Anniversary Celebrations SeniorNet Manawatū 20 July 2022



30 members braved the cold and wet on Wednesday, 20 July, to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of SeniorNet in Palmerston North.

Our President, John Gibsone welcomed everyone to the celebration and then asked Mike Lawrence, a Life Member and our current representative to the SeniorNet Federation, to give a brief talk on our history:

SeniorNet was an idea conceived in the USA for educating seniors in the use of computers. Its arrival in Palmerston North was an initiative of Terrace-End Rotary Club who began a series of meetings to establish what was needed. SeniorNet Palmerston North was born in July 1997. SeniorNet started meeting in the T & G Building on Broadway Avenue, moving later to what is now UCOL. Membership grew to over 600, but funding was available through the Ministry of Education to pay for the accommodation and computers. When funding was stopped and UCOL was no longer able to provide accommodation, 105 Princess Street, with rooms tailor-made to our needs, became our home. There we remained until a large and unsustainable rent increase in 2018 forced us to find a new home again. The Chinese Associations' Rooms on Napier Road was considered, but the upstairs access was too difficult for many members. The Milson Community Centre, having been refurbished by the city council, just prior to the pandemic has proven ideal for our needs so far.

Over the years, the teaching of programs for desk-top computers using manuals as student guides has changed dramatically as the number and range of devices has increased - devices that weren't around in those early days, such as mobile phones, tablets, laptops etc. Our tutors need to get up to speed fast as these devices are also evolving fast. Recently, Chromebooks have become very popular and our Learning Centre has become an advocate for their use for older people.

Currently our membership is around 100, and our small but eager band of tutors and volunteer helpers is kept busy. We changed our name to SeniorNet Manawatū as we encompass training for members who live outside the city - weekly sessions are now held in Feilding - and more of our activities are now online such as SeniorHangouts, using Zoom.

Following Mike's talk, we enjoyed a very pleasant afternoon tea provided by Marie with Jo Scott, Rachael Trembath and Gaylene Thompson from the Lion's Club. We had the usual raffle, the winners being David Illingworth and Pat Rowe.

A celebration cake was cut by Shirley Walters, one of our Life Members.



Members then enjoyed exchanging memories of their early days with SeniorNet and computers.

All in all, a pleasant afternoon enjoyed by all that attended.

