

Welcome to another edition of

AIR FLOW

The newsletter of the NEW ZEALAND SPEAK EASY ASSOCIATION
(A self-help support group for people who stutter)

Number 2, June 2009

Edited by Bruce Whitfield, Canterbury Branch Member.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

It was suggested during the proceedings at the recent annual National Conference/AGM that we retain the name of AIR FLOW for our quarterly newsletter. So... here it is!

Remember our Mission Statement is:

“ACHIEVING FLUENCY WITH CONFIDENCE & SUPPORT”

What have you done in the last three months to put yourself in a challenging speaking situation? How did you fare? What support have you given to other people who stutter? Would you like to write an article about it & submit it for publication in the next edition of AIR FLOW?

The NZ Speak Easy Assn has recently held its 22nd National Conference & AGM. Would any member, probably of long-standing, like to start preparing a booklet, tracing the history of the organization, ready for our 25th anniversary? George Patterson in Auckland is going to relieve our former AIR FLOW editor of several boxes of papers, which would be a valuable resource for the author of such a publication.

On the subject of Booster Days again. Would branches like to consider running their own boosters? Surely we have enough depth of talent & experience for groups to do their own thing. I have heard it said, “That teaching is one of the best methods of learning”! The benefits of running our own boosters would be:

1. Not having to fit in with the dates that a professional therapist has available.
2. Can be arranged almost immediately, & at our convenience.
3. Would probably have no cost to the participants.
4. Would probably have no call on Speak Easy funds.
5. The day could be easily tailored to suit those attending.

Most Speak Easy members have attended at least one fluency course, so let's share our knowledge & experiences, so that we all benefit & take responsibility for our own progress.

There will be a McGuire Programme Refresher Day in Christchurch on Saturday 13th June 09, & a full weekend refresher in Auckland on Saturday 12th & Sunday 13th September 09. These days are an opportunity for non-McGuire graduates to come along & find out what the Programme is all about. The times are 8.45am to 5pm all days. The venues have yet to be arranged. George Patterson has a copy of the McGuire Programme Manual & John Harrison's manual for the Auckland Speak Easy members to browse through. There is no charge for non-graduates. Until a new New Zealand Regional Director for the Programme is found, people have to travel to Australia to do the full 4-day intensive course. Further details can be obtained by visiting the McGuire website www.mcguireprogramme.com or emailing or phoning me (Bruce Whitfield 03-343-0053).

A new private business called COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REHABILITATION ASSOCIATES has opened in Dunedin, which offers speech & language therapy for children & young adults, & voice therapy for adults & children. More information about this & their other services can be obtained by emailing enquiries@carateam.co.nz

Anna Hearne, the Clinical Director at S.T.A.R.T. in Auckland, departed these shores in May to go back & live in Australia. Canterbury & Auckland Speak Easy members in particular, received much encouragement & inspiration from time spent in Anna's company. I feel sure all SE members will join me in wishing Anna & her husband well in their future ventures. Anna is however committed to returning to NZ each year to teach a course at the University of Auckland & also Canterbury. Two part-time therapists, Roz & Rachel, who work at S.T.A.R.T., will take over the role of Speech Therapy Advisors to the NZSEA.

Kari Sotamaa, originally from Finland, wishes to be remembered to the Auckland Speak Easy members. After attending four McGuire Programme intensive courses in Australia during 2008, Kari has passed the written exams for becoming a Certified Primary Coach (85%) & Course Instructor (91%) & not surprisingly achieved 8.89 out of a possible 9 in the Peer Evaluation for his verbal presentations. This mark could possibly be the highest ever awarded. Congratulations Kari! Kari

has now migrated to Melbourne where he has work as a clinical psychologist. You can visit his business website at:
www.positivepsychology.net.au

The latest edition of JOHN HARRISON'S manual, "Redefining Stuttering – What the struggle to speak is *really* all about" is now available free of charge from the link of the home page of the McGuire Programme website. This is the 12th edition in 20yrs & is a fairly lengthy read at 462 pages. I suggest you print off PART 1 (49 pages) & concentrate on working on those 10 speech assignments before reading & re-reading the following chapters. John is a member of the National Stuttering Assn in the USA & invites people to contact him to help tackle their affliction.

Remember to visit the NZ Speak Easy Assn website. Mark Beavis in Auckland has spent much time redeveloping a prototype website with GOOGLE as the new host, but the original address of www.speakeasynz.org.nz will get you there. It is reported that the site is receiving on average about 1,000 hits a month.

A copy of the INTERNATIONAL STUTTERING ASSN newsletter "One Voice", along with other information, can be accessed from their website at www.stutterISA.org You might like to make a contribution to that publication as well. The next ISA World Convention will be held in Argentina in 2011. Some New Zealanders have attended previous conventions & have reported that the experience has been truly worthwhile. If you plan to be there, now is the time to start saving your pennies & making preliminary arrangements.

The foldaway Speak Easy scroll banner has been passed to me for safekeeping. If any branch wishes to use it, please feel free to let me know.

The editorial deadline for the next edition of AIR FLOW is 1st September 2009. Please email any contributions to Bruce Whitfield at:
brucepw@slingshot.co.nz

S.T.A.R.T. INTENSIVE PROLONGED SPEECH COURSE

The Stuttering Treatment and Research Trust (START) and the University of Auckland are offering a weeklong intensive course for adults who stutter.

The course will be held at the START rooms in Parnell, Auckland. It will be led by Roz Young and Rachel Dobbin (Speech Language Therapists) and Student Clinicians from the University of Auckland.

The course consists of:

- 5-day Intensive Therapy Program: **13th to 17th July 2009**
- Weekly **Follow-up Sessions** for 4 weeks following the course
- Cost \$500 (\$350 for concessions) including course and follow up

For more information please contact:

Roz or Rachel at START on 09-379-6364 or email support@start.org.nz

2009 NATIONAL AGM/CONFERENCE REPORT

Nina Clark-Whitfield, Canterbury Branch Member

The 2009 New Zealand Speak Easy Assn Annual Conference commenced at 7.30pm in the Function Room of the Victoria Hotel, on the corner of St Andrews Street and Cumberland Street, Dunedin on Friday 1st May. After a hearty welcome by Otago Speak Easy President, Chris O’Leary, the Speak Easy Annual Oratory Competition began with an introduction by James Fox. The illustrious judges were: Clive Matheson, a Labour Government M.P. who has been awarded the Order of Merit and is well-known for his work in innovation and communications at the University of Otago. Clive judged the content section of the competition. Lois Lawn, a well-known speech therapist from Dunedin and a former President of the NZ Speech Therapist’s Association from 1980-84, was the second judge. She judged the delivery of the speeches. Lois is also known for her work with Guides, and her involvement with the Fortune Theatre and the Otago Arts Council. She is also an Order of Merit Winner.

The topic was “What Colour Is My Parachute”? However, there was some confusion over this title, with some people declaring it to be “The Colour Of My Parachute.” Despite this discrepancy, all seven entries in the contest gave worthy renditions. There was fierce rivalry between last year’s winner, Bruce Whitfield from Christchurch, who had already won the competition 5 times and the 2007 winner Steve McDowell from Tauranga. Both of these candidates performed admirably with Bruce coming out on top for the sixth time. When second and third place getters were not named, some suggested this would be desirable at future annual oratory competitions. No definitive decision has yet been taken about this.

The Oratory Competition was followed with a presentation about *Childhood Stuttering* by Lisa Gallagher; a Dunedin based Speech Therapist working at a private speech clinic run by the C.A.R.A. Trust. The C.A.R.A. Trust, eponym **C**ommunity **A**ssessment **R**ehabilitation **A**ssociates is passionately dedicated to providing quality services in speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, injury prevention, assessment and rehabilitation, education, health, safety consultancy and wellness services to the general public. Lisa and her co-worker use the Lidcombe Programme with pre-school children, which was developed by Professional Mark Onslow & Associates at the University of Sydney

during the 1980s. This programme was hailed as a break-through, as it espoused a stutter-free speech focus.

Its advantages are that it is a parent-based treatment incorporated into the child's daily activities. The treatment is adapted to each child's individual needs, and changes over time as problems arise. The parent who praises and rewards fluent speech is working one-on-one. It has proven to be cost-effective, with the therapist just providing the monitoring of what the parent is doing at home. It has been seen to have long-lasting effects on the child's fluency. Parents can self-refer their pre-schoolers or school age kids to the C.A.R.A. Trust for stuttering treatment. Although the focus is on children aged 5 to 8yrs, who have been dysfluent for six months or more, the Trust will accept children with a stutter at any age, as stuttering has such a negative impact on a child's social development as they get older.

Friday night's conference programme ended with supper provided by the Victoria Hotel. At this point Bruce Whitfield produced a fruitcake, which he had baked and transported down to Dunedin. Bruce realized that it was 21 years since the first Speak Easy AGM/Conference and he produced the cake to celebrate this momentous occasion. I was in the act of lighting the 21 candles on the cake; when Chris O'Leary rushed over to hastily blow out the candles already alight. We had not thought about the smoke detectors in the ceiling! Thus, activation of the fire alarm was averted. Margaret Deuchrass, the Speak Easy member present with the longest membership, cut the cake. Delegates were then able to enjoy a piece of Bruce's offering along with the very delicious supper.

At 8.45am on Saturday morning the conference started again with a relaxation taken by James Fox, followed by the Annual General Meeting. The minutes from last year's AGM were read out. From the Correspondence it was noted that as all branches are charities, they pay no tax. Any available overseas' newsletters regarding stuttering are to be circulated to all branches for members' perusal. This was followed by The President's Report and The Treasurer's Report.

After some debate it was declared that the levy that all branches pay to the national body is to stay the same. There was a remit from the Canterbury Branch, that as our AIR FLOW magazine is no longer published in hard copy form and distributed by post, the amount that each branch pays to the national body should reduce. This proposal was not passed. It was suggested that if local branches want more funds with which to work, they should increase the branch levy.

Nominations were then called, for the election of executive positions. Ian Taylor indicated he was standing down as President, after 3yrs at the helm and 5yrs all told on the Executive Committee. He declared that it was time for new blood. Bruce Whitfield's name was put forward and then seconded to be the new President. With Bruce vacating the Vice-President's seat, George Patterson was nominated and declared the new Vice-President. James Fox is to remain Secretary and Ngaire Renton as Treasurer. Publicity officer Steven Hoare-Vance is also to retain his position.

The Speak Easy banner is to move to Christchurch during Bruce Whitfield's Presidency and is available for use at local branches whenever required.

The link to One Voice is to be noted in the next AIR FLOW so members have access to this very valuable newsletter.

With New Zealand Speak Easy membership numbers continuing to decline, we must all continue to seek new members, both from speech therapists working with stutterers and those who do the McGuire Programme Courses. This is the only way to ensure that Speak Easy will continue into the future. Delegates at the Conference were challenged: how can you as a person who stutters help to keep the Speak Easy group going? Make a commitment to come along to Speak Easy meetings, rather than shying away from being a part of this self-help support group. This is what stutterers have a tendency to do.

The date of next year's AGM/Conference and the venue were discussed. It is to be in Auckland in May 2010. The date has not yet been set. Watch this space!

At the end of the morning session, Bruce Whitfield reported that only one essay had been submitted for the Speak Easy 2009 Annual Essay Competition. This essay was read to those gathered by Nina Clark-Whitfield. The author, so far unnamed, was declared the winner of the "SPIRIT OF EMILY" cup.

Presentation of Awards:

Vivienne Mills, Tauranga was honoured by Ian Taylor for her work on the Tauranga Executive.

Best New Member: Prem Sivakanthan, Auckland

Best Branch: Tauranga

President's Cup for Outstanding Achievement: Bruce Whitfield
 Spirit of Emily Cup for the SE Annual Essay Competition: Bruce Whitfield.

Bruce could be said to have won the "Superfecta", by being elected President and collecting all 3 silver trophies on offer.

Nick Tunbridge from Australia was the keynote speaker on Saturday afternoon. Nick is a stutterer who has done smooth speech, acupuncture and hypnosis on his journey to find fluency. He is notable for his book, "*The Stutterer's Survival Guide*". Then in 1996 he wrote, "*Believe in Yourself*" and "*Love Your Work*". This is a psychology-focused work that discusses supporting yourself with the right attitude. As his career focus, Nick works with CEOs to find the right people for their businesses.

Nick maintains that motivational/inspirational speaking has its place, but not for our conference. Rather, he sees our conference as an opportunity to take a strategy to reach the goals that we want; to use the occasion for collective learning and the sharing of information that we each possess. We must exist to send our message out, even if we positively affect the life of only one person.

Nick maintains that stutterers are uniquely challenged, as no one is ever ready for a stutterer when the stutterer tries to speak. No one expects what can come out of a stutterer's mouth. Therefore, stuttering very much affects us; who we are, who we want to be, and what we do in our daily lives. Stutterers have to know who they are, otherwise when they are in emotional situations they do not know how to act & react.

So take a step back! What triggers your feelings of not coping? Being self-aware is dependent on your personal development. We have a key role to help others get ready for the next stage in the stuttering journey. Have you ever thought about disclosing that you are a stutterer? How would you go? When a disclosure about stuttering is made, it takes the pressure off your performance. Stutterers suffer from role entrapment; they are held back by being stutterers.

We need to know what our triggers are and what our personality is. What situations make it worse for us to use technique? Feel personally powerful and be selfish, and put yourself above the person you're communicating with. What is your goal? Fluency at all costs or getting by come what may? Know your goal! If not, the negative experiences you have had will never be reversed.

There is a body of evidence that says you will stutter, so today, go into this situation and use whatever technique you have learnt to remain fluent. Learn how to recover. In order to do this, crank up the technique and learn to accept the embarrassment associated with it. Start to talk at 50 syllables per minute and be embarrassed. Feel yourself controlling the stutter and maintaining fluency!

Whenever you introduce yourself to others, smile. The mental fear that creates the physical tension then evaporates. Self-belief and body language are all visible before one word is uttered. Then your speech undermines you. When making a connection and building a rapport with others, be aware of body language and show others you are pleased to be there. If you overtalk others in a conversation to get your point in, that input may become redundant or irrelevant. Rather, do not speak for 2 to 3 seconds, so you do not overtalk and destroy the rapport you have already established. If this happens, all is in vain. Stutterers have a tendency to interrupt when they believe they can get their words out fluently. Every word is valuable. Words are important. Speed is contagious, but above all play your own game. Be concise – speak less to say more!

Electronic fluency devices versus technique? Devices, or Speech Easy Aids, may become a dependency with the result that stutterers lose the use of their technique. They may also pick up environmental noise. However, it is possible to go to the USA and have one custom fitted. Just google “Speech Easy” to find out more about them.

So what is positive about stuttering? It is an opportunity to look at ourselves and our problems and make improvements. We learn empathy as a life skill. We gain sensitivity to people around us and learn to be non-judgmental. We belong to a brotherhood; a group.

Have you ever wondered what sort of person you would be if you had not been a person who stutters? We are fortunate to have been given a rare opportunity to connect with other people who stutter. Connections are so important. We would not like it if we were without them; we would be isolated and alone.

To speak well, there are five points to remember according to President Obama:

1. Talk about the audience’s concerns (in order to connect with them)
2. Keep it simple (core message)
3. Anticipate what the audience is thinking

4. Learn to pause
5. Master body language

Nick Tunbridge's Lasting Message:

“The role we play must be to reach out and communicate to educate and improve the lives of people who stutter”.

Visit his website at: <http://nicktunbridge.com>

Nick Tunbridge's 2 presentations were split by an appetizing afternoon tea.

Then it was the turn of Vikki Mardell, a Speech Therapy student from Auckland, and Speak Easy member, to give a presentation about the subject of her Master's Thesis. This was to do with videotaping adults who stutter, then deleting the dysfluent speech and reassembling the tape so that the subject can view himself or herself as a fluent speaker. The subject then replays the tape over & over again on a regular basis to reinforce the perception that they are an acceptable good fluent speaker.

Open Forum ended the afternoon's programme, and gave all the Speak Easy members the opportunity to say a few words, about anything, to the group. A well-attended evening meal at the Victoria Hotel ended a most enjoyable and beneficial 22nd NZSEA Conference. A big thank you to all who made it possible & brought it to fruition.

NICK TUNBRIDGE

Stephen Hoare-Vance, Canterbury Branch Member

I met Nick in the foyer of the Victoria Hotel in Dunedin when I arrived for the 2009 Speakeasy national conference, and I was immediately impressed with his confidence – although I gave some rather confusing directions about the possibility of where to find a meal that night. I remembered his name from discussions about being a speaker at the 2007 national conference in Christchurch.

Nick gave a presentation to the conference on Saturday afternoon the 2nd May. He said his first experience of speech therapy was in 1977 when he learned “Controlled Speech”. I thought his speech sounded very fluent, so he must have learnt how to manage dysfluency. He wrote a book called “Stuttering: a Survivor's Guide” which was published in the 1990s. In 2006 he had another book published which deals with self-help strategies,

and he is looking at publishing a further book on stuttering. He said that conferences such as this one were very important to meet people and to learn.

Running an executive recruitment firm in Melbourne with a partner has its challenges, and he has been to several international conferences of which he shared his learning experiences. At one such conference, he met a blind man who stutters, and when asked what he would most like to have taken away, he said his stutter, rather than blindness! Nick talked about acknowledging stuttering as part of the job application process. He said that often people listening “just don’t know what is going on”. Apparently 70% of people surveyed who stuttered said that it had negatively affected their job prospects. Nick was therefore in favour of disclosure.

After a break, Nick discussed the situation when a fluent speaker is speaking and a stutterer wants to say something (something I often face). The question is often whether to speak when it is relevant or when one is comfortable (or able). He recommended waiting until they had finished speaking and waiting for three seconds before saying anything. Summing up, he said, “It’s not telling your story, - it’s answering the question”!

Nick gave some TIPS FOR GIVING A PRESENTATION

1. Address the audience’s concern, for example, how will the content affect them negatively?
2. Describe problems and challenges on their minds.
3. Keep it simple and avoid too many details
4. Anticipate what the audience is thinking
5. Learn to pause
6. Master the body language of success/control

In all, Nick himself gave a professional and relevant presentation. Earlier, in the annual general meeting, Nick said, “Speech Language Therapists are your ambassadors” and dialogue with them is the key to a successful group. He wouldn’t approach a group of health professionals without having a SLT to interpret his message into professional language. The Otago Branch had chosen a most interesting and inspiring speaker whose message bodes well for the future of fluency management in Australasia.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Bruce Whitfield, NZ Speak Easy Assn National President

Greetings dear NZ Speak Easy Assn members. I have been endowed with the honour of being the National President for the next 12 months. I feel sure that we are all a little sad to learn of the stepping down of our former President for the last 3yrs Ian Taylor. Ian has done a wonderful job of keeping our house in order, & I know I will be asking for his advice & guidance during the coming year.

George Patterson of the Auckland Branch was elected to the position of Vice President, & Donald Welsh from Tauranga has come onto the National Committee as the Waikato Branch Representative. Welcome aboard Donald. Mark Beavis replaces Laurence Bacchus as the Webmaster. Thank you Mark. James Fox (secretary), Ngaire Renton (treasurer) & Stephen Hoare-Vance (publicity officer) all retained their previous roles.

The recent National Conference/AGM was in my opinion a resounding success. It was great to meet up with people from previous years & to get acquainted with one or two new people. I was impressed at the way that several Otago members took a turn at being Master of Ceremonies during the proceedings. It was pleasing to see Margaret looking so well, & just as wonderful to see & hear Nina being brave enough to read out the winning Essay Competition entry as well as saying a few words in the Open Forum segment on the Saturday afternoon. In fact, well done to all those who attended; you all helped to make the event very worthwhile. Word has it that Ngaire did most of the work in organising the weekend, so an especially big thank you to her. The bonus for me was having 3 days away from the regular daily routine. See you all at the next Conference in Auckland, May 2010.

Speak Easy continues to struggle with attracting & retaining new people to our support groups. I believe we have between 50-60 members nationwide. If 1% of the adult population has a stutter, then there must be around 40,000 people who stutter in NZ. If we could encourage only 1% of them into our fold we would have 400 members. But sadly, as things stand, this is not going to happen. We cannot expect professional speech therapists to really aid our cause; they are busy enough with more serious work cases. It is up to us Speak Easy members to spread the good

news about the benefits of tackling one's stutter/fluency & to demonstrate what can be achieved with commitment & practice. Our focus should be to use good technique in every speaking situation. I love the quote on one speech therapist's business card, which says, "Staying afloat is not enough, the aim is to run on water"!

If any member has anything that they would like to be discussed at a Speak Easy National Committee meeting, please put it in writing & send it to one of the following people:

PRESIDENT

Bruce Whitfield, 22 Newnham Tce, Upper Riccarton, Christchurch 8041
 Email brucepw@slingshot.co.nz
 Phone home (03) 343-0053
 Mobile – none

VICE PRESIDENT

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SECRETARY

James Fox, 41 Meridian St, Port Chalmers, Dunedin 9023
 Email jamesfox@actrix.co.nz
 Phone home (03) 472-7996
 Mobile 027-292-3699

The winning essay of the 3rd annual:

New Zealand SPEAK EASY Association
Essay Competition 2009

WITH HINDSIGHT... even the bad memories are
good!

Bruce Whitfield, Canterbury Speak Easy member.

The first memory I have of being aware that I stuttered was soon after I started school. I remember having a fear of being asked to stand up & read during class. Thankfully I cannot remember being asked, so maybe

the teacher had been forewarned of my impediment. Also, I was unable to convey to the teacher that I had not had my turn at playing with the toys in the waterbath. Something I always wanted to do, but never did.

Then of course, I went through the whole of my school life never asking or answering a question in class. I must have been fairly bright though, because midway through my 5th year at primary school, I got promoted to a more advanced class. In this new environment I was “*given*” 23 marks out of 25 for reading. Maybe my teacher had some insight, & believed that I had some latent potential as an orator, & maybe deep down inside I felt I had to eventually earn & deserve that mark.

During my final year at primary school I reluctantly gave a presentation to the class of 30 pupils on the subject of my stamp collection. As I expected, it was a dismal failure. In 1960, at the age of 13yrs I met a person who owned a tape recorder. I was somehow persuaded to say a few words into the microphone. I was devastated at hearing my dysfluent speech played back, & shed quite a few tears as a consequence. In my first year at high school, I diligently learned what I perceived to be an “easy to read” passage from the bible, but when the big day arrived, it didn’t come out at all well, & from a listener’s point of view, it was probably incomprehensible.

Never the less, my fluency outside the classroom was somewhat better & I always had a fair number of good friends. Finding an after school job, or work during the holidays, did not really register on my radar, & I relied heavily on my mother to seek out such opportunities. Some came, but no doubt a great number of others were missed. My dear mother was instrumental in arranging my first proper full-time job. Ah... what would we do without our Mum?

From then on, I somehow made my own way in the world, which included a 3yr working holiday in Europe. I was never out of a job, I enjoyed socialising, & I managed to keep in touch with people who I considered to be friends. On the other hand, I usually avoided strangers & large crowds. I rarely spoke up in group situations, I found it difficult forming relationships with members of the opposite sex, & I hated using the telephone. All pretty familiar experiences to many people who stutter.

But I never really felt depressed because of my stuttering. There were always plenty of fun things happening in my life to keep me cheerful. Amazingly, I have never been given a hard time because of my stutter. I

guess that is something to be really thankful for. There have been many occasions when I have had a day-destroying bad block in my speech & these have certainly left a lasting impression with me. Like on my 23rd birthday. I was on a cycling holiday & I had spent the previous night at the Carlisle Youth Hostel in northwest England. I rode over the border into Scotland & stopped to buy 2 delicious looking scones for lunch. I stuttered so badly that the man behind the counter thought I was having a fit or something.

When I finally attempted some speech therapy at the age of 31yrs, my life seemed to adopt a rosier hue. In the past, I relied on my then first wife to make all the business phones calls etc. Now, for the first time, I believed there was an achievable alternative to what I had been doing. But I still struggled, & how!!!! I tensed the muscles in my chest & neck, I contorted my face, I closed my eyes &/or looked away, & I made horrible nasal sounds... which also hurt!

After a few months of therapy, I had probably the funniest scenario in relation to my speech. Remember that party game called Chinese Whispers? You whisper a sentence to someone, & they whisper it to the next person & so on, until it has done the full round of participants, & then you find out that the words had been misheard or misinterpreted, as they were passed around. The best-known version when I was a kid, began with the Army Officer whispering to the next in line, "Send reinforcements, we're going to advance". Then it got whispered along the column until finally it got repeated as "Send three & four-pence, we're going to a dance"! My episode involved me phoning the chemistry technician on another floor in the building where I worked, & saying, in what I thought was pretty good fluency technique, "Your dry ice is on the lift". There was a bit of a pregnant pause from my listener, so I naturally thought that my speech had not been adequate. Eventually there was a querying voice that said, "My right eye is on the left"???? I eventually cracked up about this retort & laughed about it for many months afterwards.

So it's not all doom & gloom just because you have a stutter. In my idle moments I sometimes ponder, if I had the choice, what other disability would I rather have instead? Well, I've thought long & hard, & I've decided that all the other disabilities are significantly less tolerable than mine. So maybe my affliction is not such a burden after all. I've now learned to control the worst of it. Plus I've met so many inspirational people, & made so many great friends, & had so many exciting trips away, & all because of my stutter.

AUCKLAND BRANCH REPORT

George Patterson, Auckland Branch President

WHANGAPARAOA GROUP

This group unfortunately was discontinued in 2008 owing to hosts Ron and June Stanwell moving to Tauranga. There is no other suitable place for the group to meet and there is not much chance of reconvening it even if a venue was found, as the members are all in their seventies and some are not in the best of health.

WAITAKERE GROUP

The past year has seen a decrease in attendance, with regular numbers at a maximum of four. Others have moved away from the district or do not attend.

AUCKLAND GROUP

This past year has been a very good one for the Auckland Branch, with numbers averaging between 8-12 members per meeting. As at the beginning of this calendar year attendance was a little slow due to the Christmas and New Year shutdown, and students being away until February. However we are now enjoying larger groups again.

All members get involved in the meetings, showing a lot of enthusiasm as well as input into what they would like to see covered during the meetings. This has resulted in significant improvement in each member's journey, be it physiological or psychological.

We send a word of thanks to all members at S.T.A.R.T. A special thanks to Anna Hearne for her personal involvement and commitment to ensuring the success of Speak Easy, and her enthusiasm around the various initiatives done to date. Unfortunately we say goodbye to Anna, as her and hubby have very recently moved to Australia and wish them well on this new adventure.

The Auckland Branch has taken on the task of revitalizing the NZSEA website, so thanks to Mark Beavis for leading this project. We look forward to continuing with this process. Thanks too to the many other people who have taken on various tasks, and leading the group meetings.

A number of us travelled down to Dunedin to attend the Speak Easy National AGM and Conference, which was a fantastic event organized by the local branch. The Best New Member award went to one of our own... Prem! Well done Prem, a well deserved recipient.

In closing, we have had a great year of personal growth. It is sometimes difficult to recognize one's own achievements, but I can honestly say that every one of the group's members has grown ... so well done folks, keep it up!

CANTERBURY BRANCH REPORT

Barry Hay, Canterbury Branch President

The Canterbury Branch of the NZSEA held its annual oratory competition on Thursday evening 2nd April 2009 and the winner was Karl Schumacher. Well done Karl! The other place getters were Monica and Bruce. Well done to all participants once again. The standard was very high and the judges were once again amazed with the standard of the speeches. We had our AGM on 16th April and all sitting members were voted back into office with Alan Staite joining as a committee member.

Some branch members are participating in a study being held at the Dept of Communication Disorders, University of Canterbury, where Wanita Lynn is researching a project called Dichotic Listening. The aim of the project is to evaluate the effects of listening to different speech sounds presented into each ear at the same time and determining which of these sounds is heard most clearly. They are interested in determining whether people who stutter differ from people who don't stutter in their perception of speech sounds.

Congratulations to Bruce on being elected New Zealand President. We are having a booster speech therapy course in the near future.

In the last Air Flow an article written by Steven Hoare-Vance mentioned about Speak Easy working with the McGuire Programme. Well the McGuire members are welcome to attend our meetings and we have several members in our group including Steven, but the problem is that the McGuire Programme is a profit making organization and Speak Easy is an incorporated society.

A friend of mine sent me a good tip about stopping viruses infecting your

email lists. He said: “To enter aaaaa@AAAAA in your address list, and the virus can’t send the virus to the first address so it can’t go through the list”.

OTAGO SOUTHLAND BRANCH REPORT

John McMorran, Otago Branch Member

Hi everyone! Winter is now upon us with snow, cold winds and plenty of rain. Never mind, it has not stopped the Dunedin branch members from getting to our meetings.

Firstly, a run down of branch activities over the past month or so. On the 20th April we held our local AGM. Our local Patron Clive Mattewson attended the meeting and spoke in positive terms as to the future of our group and Speak Easy as a whole. Clive has been a very positive catalyst to us and his easy attitude to life is very encouraging to all.

The following were re-elected to office:

President: Chris O'Leary

Secretary: John McMorran, email pjmcm@xtra.co.nz

Treasurer: Ngaire Renton, email rentonnn@ihug.co.nz

Chris was also re-elected as our Publicity Officer.

While the branch has not grown in numbers, we still have a close relationship with each other that allows us to confide in each other.

At our meeting after the National AGM/Conference we had a run down of the weekend, with each of us standing up and giving our thoughts on what we got out of the conference. All thoughts were very positive. We were pleased that our oratory competition topic was so well accepted, and that all those taking part used the subject so well. Weren't all the speeches great?

At the beginning of the year Ngaire emailed most of the speech therapists in our area to come and join with us at one of our meetings to exchange ideas, and find ways for group members to help each other. We were keen to get a good response but only ONE therapist came... a gentleman from Gore. He was pleased he came to listen to us, and gave each of us some positive exercises that we could do to help our speech. Have we got it all wrong, or are speech therapists not interested in our problems? Maybe they just don't have the time!

As winter sets in we will continue to meet once a fortnight and work on our individual problems and hopefully achieve full fluency.

WAIKATO BRANCH REPORT

Donald Welsh, Waikato Branch President

Upon reflection, the year ending 31st March 2009 was a busy and eventful one. We regretfully saw the folding of the Hamilton group and the Tauranga group became the only one running the region.

The Tauranga group quickly held an extraordinary meeting and elected officeholders and committee members. There was a national AGM/conference to organise and money to raise.

The National Speak Easy Conference was held in Tauranga after many hours of hard work by a dedicated group of members, and was a great success. Regretfully, for Tauranga, the trophy for the Oratory Competition was lost to a group from the South Island, so we wait and prepare for next year!

During the year the group has maintained regular fortnightly meetings at the home of Steve McDowell, and from Christmas, that night has been Sunday, which appears to work for most people. Like all groups we have a few people sitting on the fringe and others who are regular faces at the meetings.

Some members have had yearly maintenance sessions at the Speech Therapy Department of the Tauranga Hospital, others have a yearly check-in with the McGuire Programme, and others are still deciding to start the recovery journey. While we have some connection with the speech therapists in Tauranga, this is not at the level that it was many years ago. I believe that there are other speech therapists that we could introduce ourselves to, in order to assist some of their clients, and to strengthen our group with members. For now however, I see that as a hope for the future, and we need to stay focussed on today.

I wish to thank all the committee members of the Tauranga Speak Easy group for their support of me in my role as Branch President, and would like to give a special mention to Vivienne Mills who has taken on the dual role of secretary and treasurer.

I wish you all the best for the future.

WAIKATO BRANCH REPORT #2

Ian Taylor, Coordinator

The Tauranga group of the NZ Speak Easy Assn continues to meet on alternate Sunday evenings at 7.30 pm at Stephen McDowell's home in Waihi Rd, Tauranga. Attendance is between 4-6 members. Our next Sunday evening meeting (31st May) is a pre-winter dinner for the Tauranga Speakeasy Group and friends at the China Town Restaurant at Fraser Cove.

At our last meeting, Stephen and I reported back on our trip to Dunedin where we attended the 22nd AGM and Conference of the NZSEA. We both had a wonderful trip and enjoyed the hospitality of our Otago friends. The conference was well organized with an interesting programme. The weather during the weekend was tremendous, with beautiful calm sunny yet cool days. The locals tell me that this is typical Dunedin weather.

Both Stephen and I tried hard to wrestle the Oratory Cup off Bruce Whitfield but to no avail. It has left us even more determined to try and topple the current holder at the Auckland meeting in May 2010.

McGUIRE REFRESHER WEEKEND REPORT

Wellington, New Zealand 28th & 29th March 2009

By Bruce Whitfield

McGuire Programme Certified Course Instructor & Staff Trainer

I enjoyed an uneventful flight from Christchurch to Wellington on a very pleasant autumn day. I landed at 2.45pm & took the airbus into the city centre, crossed over the road to the Wellington railway station & purchased a train ticket for Paraparaumu. As I wrestled my 2 bags into a suitable storage place, my mobile phone rang & it was Luke Hwang asking where I was at that moment. He advised me that he was close by,

so he rushed to the station, bought the required ticket, & boarded the carriage from where I was waiting & hailing him.

The train journey took almost 1 hour. Luke had flown down from Auckland earlier in the day; firstly to have an interview with his library course supervisor, their first ever face to face meeting, & then to hopefully meet up with me somewhere along the route. We spent the time catching up with each other's news, whilst maintaining good McGuire technique. As we approached our destination Luke sent a text message to Jamie Dusing, who was giving us both accommodation, & Jamie obligingly came in his car to meet us & transport us back to his home just a few kilometres away.

On Saturday morning the 3 of us arose in time to have breakfast etc & then drive the short distance to Jamie's parents house, which was the venue for the meeting. The plan was to start at 8.45am. Eight very keen McGuire graduates eventually turned up, with another 3 sending their apologies for not being able to make it due to work commitments, & another small number just not arriving as they had indicated they would. We all sat around the big oval dining table & commenced the necessary work. Everybody had good technique when they started, & excellent technique by the end of the weekend.

Jamie & his parents provided more than adequate morning & afternoon teas, plus 2 gourmet barbeque lunches, with fish the first day & lamb chops & sausages the second day, together with ample salads & drinks. The weather was magnificent both days & we sat outside at break times soaking up the sun, the tranquillity & the good company. Graduates were pretty good at knowing all the points on the Checklist, & we were able to revisit all the major modules of the programme. The diaphragm & ribs animation on the laptop computer helped to remind people to use good costal breathing. We used the Interactive Notes several times, plus with just a fairly small group were able to have time for a number of impromptu speeches from everyone. I encouraged people to apply the skills that we learnt in the Harrison Workshops in all their speeches. I introduced a couple of new breathing related techniques that I picked up at yoga classes some years ago. It was pleasing to see that during the weekend nobody "held back", & that everybody said the time & effort spent was beneficial.

Those attending were Jamie, Luke, Adie Campbell, Debbie Williams, Martine Backhouse, Hayden Mischefski, Matt Wilson, & myself of course. I plan to hold a 1-day refresher at my home in Christchurch on

Saturday the 13th June 2009, then if there is enough interest I would like to run a weekend in Auckland in September 09, & a weekend in Palmerston North in November 09.

JUST KEEP SCROLLING DOWN FOLKS...

THERE'S AN ANNOYING BLANK GAP HERE THAT I CAN'T SEEM TO GET RID OF... BUT I CAN WRITE IN IT.

THERE'S 2 MORE ITEMS BELOW HERE!

First, is a poem by Philip Khouri, a Speak Easy Auckland Branch member. Philip is a lawyer as well as being something of a prolific writer of verse. He plans to publish a small book of his work sometime in the not too distant future. Now there's a fine ambition!!! Go for it Philip.

N.B. The poem may take 2 or 3 seconds to open.

Second, is an article from an amazing guy from Finland, & the story of the dramatic changes he has instigated into his life during 2008.

Kevin

Your cancer grew in spring
 while jasmine blossomed
 in the hedges
 along Grange Road
 and Epsom Avenue.

We told each-other secrets
 about our stutters.
 Eleven became ten plus one.
 Kevin and Philip
 friends
 ten plus one.

We made plans.
 When I fall off the perch.
 I want nubile naked wenches
 scattering my ashes
 around the top of Mt Eden.
 Even guys that are dying
 can make jokes
 you said.
 Hey,
 keep that sense of humour, boy.

Pain spread in you
 like the tide across mudflats.
 Too soon the tide was full.
 It was time
 to set fire to the surfboard.

Now you are part of the mountain.
 Your laughter
 and your stutter
 are echoes
 in the theatre of memory.
 Hey,
 keep that sense of humour, boy.

Philip Khoury

BREAKING LIMITING BELIEFS
WITH FAITH AND NEW MEANINGS

By Kari Sotamaa – recovering stutterer.

All my life I have been a person who stutters. I thought my stutter was always going to be a hindrance in my life, until I decided differently. This is a story about breaking limiting beliefs by giving them new meanings.

This journey started on the 13th December 2007 when I arrived in New Zealand from Finland. I had almost totally lost my capability to speak, and could not work or socialize for five months. That was devastating, so it was time to break another limiting belief in my life.

I already had had successful experiences of overcoming depression, anorexia, suicidal tendencies and many phobias and fears. So I asked myself, “Why should stuttering be any different”? I knew by my previous experiences that it was going to be a rough and bumpy ride, “But life as a stutterer is rough and bumpy anyway”, I thought.

As far as I am concerned, faith and attitude are two of the most important ingredients when it comes to breaking limiting beliefs. After five month’s humiliation I was ready to make a change. A person at a dinner party recommended the McGuire Programme to me, when he heard and saw the difficulty I was having with verbal communication. At first I considered the programme too expensive, but after a few more bad speaking experiences I thought that if the programme made even the slightest improvement to my fluency, then the benefits would be priceless.

On the 1st May 2008 I arrived in Melbourne. I am one of those stutterers, whose fluency fluctuates extremely, depending on the day, the people I am talking to, the situation and my relation to my comfort zone. In Melbourne I was amongst fellow stutterers, and my speech was almost totally fluent. I met Wendy O’Hagan, Rob Lucas, Geoff Johnston and other sufferers who seemed to be almost fully recovered from the dreaded affliction. I had found the last piece for my faith puzzle and saw a welcome bright light at the end of a long dark tunnel. I decided to leave no stone unturned in my quest for self-development.

The course was a great success, but as a former athlete I knew that man cannot master a new physical skill and the required psychological change overnight. I decided to give it maximum effort for a year. If after one year I had not noticed a major improvement in my speech I would quit and try something else. After the course I practised my new speech technique for 1-2 hours every day. I extended my comfort zone by making many phone calls and joining Toastmasters. I think breaking

limiting beliefs is ineffectual, unless new positive beliefs & attitudes are generated and enter our daily life. I changed many routines. I started to think from a different stance. I now think from the point-of-view where the stuttering is not limiting my life. I chose to be a person who sometimes stutters, but who can and will deliver a public speech; rather than pretend to be a normal fluent speaker who cannot & will not speak in public. I think the actual stuttering behaviours are not a problem. Much more important is what meaning or meanings we give to those behaviours in each particular situation.

I did my second 4-day McGuire course during June in Adelaide and a third course 3 months later in Sydney. In Sydney it was time to break another limiting belief. I participated in a Tony Robbins' seminar where I performed the act of fire walking for the very first time. I could feel the heat from 20 metres away, since the coals were 600–1000deg Celsius. I heard that some people burned their feet in previous seminars, but some did not. I decided not to burn myself. I decided to make fire my friend and gave it new meanings: fire is energy, love is energy, fire is love, and I am love. From now on, fire is a symbol of warm nurturing love. Love may burn a little bit, but it is not bad. Ask yourself, "Is it"?

"Go, go, go" the spectators and the instructor were shouting!!! I walked calmly to the other side and didn't even get a single blister. I did it again, and again, and again. Altogether six times without a single blister! The experience was very empowering. I asked again: "Could I do the same with the stuttering"? Could I give a different meaning to my stuttering? I would not have been there with those people if it were not for my stutter. I would not have received so much love, sympathy, and attention etc. without my stutter. I can respect myself so much more if I am able deliver a public speech as a person who stutters. Other people have given me quite a lot of praise and positive feedback, which I find very encouraging.

I decided to use my overcoming limiting beliefs process as a learning experience and share my knowledge with other people. I decided to apply for a position as a workshop facilitator. I got the job and have now facilitated one workshop about dealing with fears and phobias. People wrote on the feedback forms that there was an amazingly open atmosphere in the workshop, because the facilitator shared his stories and had no inhibitions about his weaknesses. I became even more convinced that people love the imperfect human being, since nothing in this world is so boring as a person trying to present themselves as perfect.

I gained more self-confidence and decided to offer my own workshop about authentic happiness and love and another about fears and phobias. A thing that I could not imagine doing a few months ago. I also started my own private psychological practice. I used to be very fearful about speaking on the telephone. Now I often practise speaking on the phone using the Skype programme on the computer. I am engaged in, and totally committed to, coaching other people to help them turn their lives around and break through fear barriers, and find their real purpose in life and make sure they reach their full potential.

Looking back at all this, I could not help other people in the way I wanted to, because of my stuttering. You cannot learn these things just from books, you need life experience. Don't get me wrong, I still have many limiting beliefs, but I have gained more faith and hope, and have a positive attitude. Today I am closer to my goal than yesterday, but still tomorrow is a new challenge. The journey is never finished, so I have decided to enjoy the ride. I hope that you enjoy your journey through life as well, whatever your goals are.

About the writer:

Kari Sotamaa is 29 years old and lives in Auckland. In the past year he has been working as an author and journalist for a Finnish publishing company and various magazines. Before coming to New Zealand he worked as a psychologist in a Psychiatric Clinic, and as a Communication and Marketing lecturer for a Business College.

You can read more of Kari's stories at www.karisotamaa.com (English) and at www.elamysseikkailu.fi (Finnish).