

Karamea Chronicle

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"In touch with our community"

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Our Stories exhibition tells the real story of disability

The West Coast is hosting a multimedia exhibition that is touring the country to change New Zealanders' attitudes towards disability.

The Our Stories exhibition, opens at the Left Bank Gallery, 1 Tainui Street, Greymouth from 05 – 20 April 2008 (free entry), and challenges Kiwis to get to know people with disabilities – to see the person first, rather than the disability.

Based on photographs by Hanne Johnsen and Glenn Busch's book, *The Man With No Arms and Other Stories*, the exhibition uses photographs, words and film to tell the stories of people with disabilities.

The project, run in partnership between CCS Disability Action and IHC, is more than just an exhibition. It includes workshops for schools and an information evening for employers and service, sport and recreation groups.

It sends the message that people with disabilities have a right to participate in the community, to share in family life, have a job and ambitions.

An evening for employers will be held on 08 April and for service, sport and recreation groups will be held on 15 April.

Throughout the exhibition, which runs until 20 April, primary school pupils will take part in educational workshops at the Left Bank Gallery called "My Name Is ...", and in parallel workshops, intermediate school pupils using the latest technology interview people with disabilities and make a short documentary as part of the Film Fest workshop.

The workshops give primary and intermediate school students the chance to meet local people with disabilities and find out what it is like to live with a disability.

In *The Man With No Arms and Other Stories*, Glenn Busch tells compelling and intimate stories of nine people who live with the reality of a disability. Busch's collaborators speak candidly of growing up, the importance of work, family, relationships, parenthood, of wanting to be treated like everyone else in a world that still chooses to see them as different.

IHC and CCS Disability Action have formed a two-year partnership to take the exhibition to audiences around the country.

IHC New Zealand Inc is pleased to be working with CCS Disability Action on this project, says chief executive Ralph Jones. "The workshops break new ground, because people with disabilities are being profiled as the experts on their own lives. They will teach children about what an ordinary life means for them," he says.

"The Our Stories project is a far bigger, more varied and more exciting project than was first planned. There is no better way to begin to understand the varied experiences disabled people have in their daily lives than to listen to and see their stories," says David Matthews, CCS Disability Action Regional Manager, Canterbury West Coast.

For further details, visit the website www.ourstories.co.nz