

# vibrations

## Is noise driving you mad?

**NOISE AWARENESS DAY: 29TH APRIL 2009**

Boy racers could be driving you mad... literally. A recent survey shows boy racers' exhaust sound is the number one annoying noise in New Zealand, followed closely by dogs barking and car or house alarms going off.

There is a lot of excessive everyday noise that can affect not only your hearing but your physical and mental health. Persistent noise has been linked with increased stress levels, headaches, aggressive behaviour, loss of sleep and in some cases even heart disease and high blood pressure.

In the lead up to New Zealand's inaugural Noise Awareness Day, the National Foundation for the Deaf (NFD) commissioned a survey to find out what noises Kiwis find really annoying and could, potentially, be making them ill.

Community noise is growing as populations increase and it has got to the stage where governmental controls should be put in place to protect citizens.

The NFD believes legislators at all levels need to protect us from noise pollution the same way they protected us from tobacco smoke and other forms of pollution.

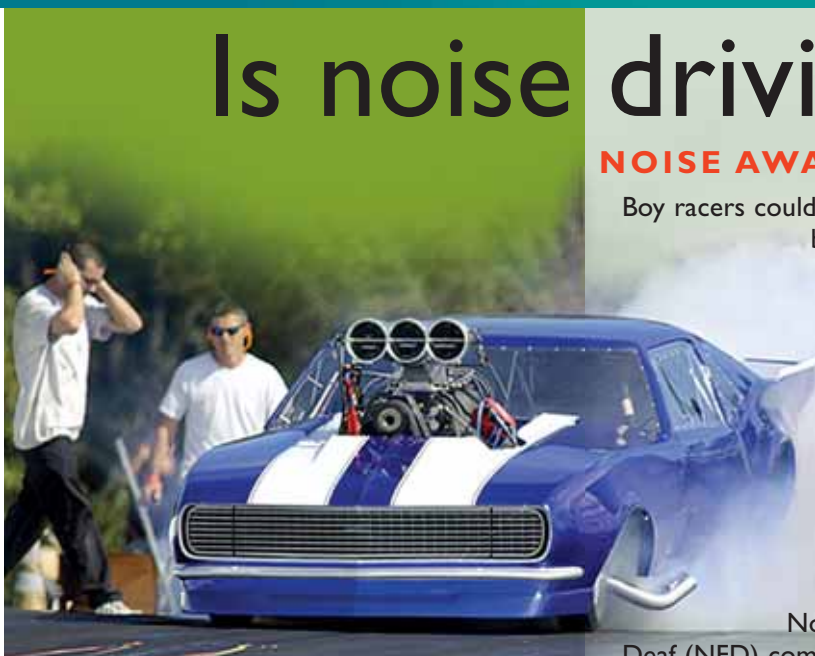
Through Noise Awareness Day the NFD wants people to stop and think about what they are doing, how loud it is and do they really need to do it. Turning down the stereo could make the difference to your neighbour's sanity.

Daniel Shepherd who has a PhD in psychophysics and lectures at the Auckland University of Technology's Department of Psychology has studied the non-auditory effects of noise.

"Not everything we hear is classified as wanted sound. One man's noise is another's music. Neighbourhood parties, barking dogs or low flying aeroplanes can be huge irritants but, in isolation, do not constitute a health risk. However, World Health Organisation (WHO) research has indicated that chronic exposure to noise can have a serious impact on your health.

"Different individuals respond differently to noise. We all know people who can remain asleep even if a large bomb was detonated outside their bedroom door, while others awoken by the sound of a pin dropping. The WHO's research showed that it is the response of the listener to noise and not noise level per se

*continued inside ...*



A recent survey undertaken by the NFD uncovered

### New Zealanders' 12 most annoying noises

1. Boy Racers' loud exhausts \_\_\_\_\_ **69%**
2. Dog(s) barking \_\_\_\_\_ **54%**
3. Car or house alarms going off \_\_\_\_\_ **50%**
4. Snoring \_\_\_\_\_ **49%**
5. Neighbour's loud music \_\_\_\_\_ **44%**
6. Neighbour's DIY Noise – hammers, drills, leaf blowers \_\_\_\_\_ **29%**
7. Neighbour's lawnmower \_\_\_\_\_ **26%**
8. Other people's mobile phones ringing \_\_\_\_\_ **17%**
9. Planes flying overhead \_\_\_\_\_ **15%**
10. Rubbish truck collecting bins \_\_\_\_\_ **15%**
11. Children/babies crying/screaming \_\_\_\_\_ **5%**
12. Body noises – chewing, coughing, humming, whistling, grinding teeth \_\_\_\_\_ **3%**



As I look around the world, I am very glad to be in New Zealand. While many countries are experiencing wars, natural disasters, starvation and mayhem I feel humbled and fortunate that most of us in this country have homes, food and access to help.

The recession is threatening to change this in New Zealand and it is still early days. The global picture is not rosy and it is undecided by our economic gurus just how bad it is going to get here. What we do know is that both individuals and businesses are being more cautious in their spending and this in turn is having an impact on charities and not for profits such as the NFD.

We rely on Trusts, individual donations and bequests and the reality is these are decreasing. But our work must go on and we look to the continuation of your generous support. There are no less people suffering from hearing loss. In fact, statistics show there is an increasing number of people at both ends of the spectrum – the elderly due to natural hearing loss and the young, often due to listening to excessively loud music for prolonged periods.

It is not just hearing loss the NFD is concerned about but also the amount of unnecessary, annoying noise that is intruding into our lives on a daily basis.

The effect of this noise pollution is far more than hearing damage. It can have a huge impact on our physical and mental health.

This year the NFD intends to raise awareness of and highlight the issues around stressful noise through our support of an international initiative – Noise Awareness Day on 29th April.

Rubbish trucks collecting bins at 5:00am, boy racers, the neighbour's dog barking – many of these annoying noises can be reduced and the NFD wants to lessen the amount of unnecessary noise.

So if we all pause on Noise Awareness Day and consider just one way we could lessen the noise in our communities we may lessen the stress and increase the peace in our daily lives.

Best wishes

Marianne Schumacher  
Executive Manager

## Quest for Excellence Scholar set to change



Natasha Barnes, a 23-year old from Christchurch, aims to change the world with the help of NFD's Quest for Excellence Scholarship.

Natasha, who has hearing loss in both ears, is the recipient of the fifth annual Quest for Excellence Scholarship. The \$15,000 scholarship was established by the NFD to recognise deaf or hearing impaired post graduate students who have overcome the odds to achieve excellence.

With an Honours degree in Diplomacy and International Relations, Natasha is currently studying for a Masters of Arts in Political Science at the University of Canterbury. She wants to bring about positive change in the world to make it a safer, more accessible place and this made her stand out as an exceptional candidate.

Having always been interested in international governance and security issues, Natasha will write her thesis on the diplomatic strategies employed by countries such as Canada, Japan, Norway and New Zealand, as leaders in the field of disarmament.

"I believe we can ensure our world's safety without excessive military spending and with greater cooperation it would be possible to ban specific types of weapons which create horrific humanitarian consequences. Land mines, cluster munitions, chemical and biological weapons have destroyed many lives. Nuclear weapons are very much still a huge threat and it is a massive challenge to strive for complete disarmament but I hope to play a part in making this a reality."

*cover story continued ...*

that predicts health outcomes," said Dr Shepherd.

Noise, even at levels that are not harmful to hearing, is perceived subconsciously as a danger signal, even during sleep.

The WHO research noted that noise pollution may cause or contribute to the following adverse effects: anxiety, stress, nervousness, nausea, headaches, emotional instability, argumentativeness, sexual impotence, changes in mood, increase in social conflicts, neurosis, hysteria and psychosis.

Children, the elderly and those with underlying depression may be particularly vulnerable to these effects because they may lack adequate coping mechanisms.

In New Zealand 'annoying' noise is on the increase. Noise Control officers around the country report continual rises in the number of noise complaints. In Auckland City last year there were 20,768

## the world



Natasha also communicates political messages through her art. Her paintings and sketches are based upon social and political issues – often contentious.

Natasha was four when a trip to the doctor uncovered her hearing loss, possibly caused by an ear infection. She spent her childhood struggling to hear but ignored the issue.

“Because I was so stubborn I refused to wear hearing aids. It meant I had to work a lot harder to hear, understand and make sure that I did not miss out on anything which was tiring and often embarrassing. A lot of people thought I was just ‘a bit blonde’.

It wasn’t until Natasha reached university that she realised large lecture theatres, conferences and presentations were a real issue and she couldn’t afford to miss out on anything. She finally relented and was fitted with hearing aids.

“My hearing aids have been fantastic. Everything is a lot sharper and clearer. It has made my life easier.”

Natasha plans to use the \$15,000 scholarship to help pay course fees as well as contribute towards a research trip to interview policy makers in Canada, Japan and Norway.

“I am thrilled to be the recipient of the Quest for Excellence Scholarship. It will really help to open a lot of doors in terms of enabling me to meet key people face to face and add depth to my research,” concluded Natasha.

## Hard of hearing, hard on relationship

Marriage on the rocks? Perhaps you or your spouse need a hearing test...

A survey conducted by battery manufacturer Energiser found that nearly half (47.8%) of respondents feel their marriage has suffered due to the hearing impairment of their spouse.

The ‘All Ears’ survey conducted in the USA, polled both women and men between 44 and 62 years of age and found that there is a close link to be made between healthy hearing and a healthy marriage.

While over half the respondents (64.8%) feel annoyed that their spouse cannot hear them, an additional 16.4% feel ignored and 8.1% feel sad or hurt by the situation.

The study revealed nearly half feel that denial is the number one reason their loved one has not gone to get a hearing check.

Stephanie Mears, associate director of Bay Audiology, says “I frequently observe the negative effects of hearing loss on people’s relationships in my role as an Audiologist. When one partner is hearing impaired, there is a reduction in communication and hence less intimacy in the relationship.”

Stephanie highlighted that it is common for both partners to become frustrated and misunderstandings occur which can then lead to arguments. Some patients have realised that if they had acted earlier to treat their hearing problem they could have saved a failed relationship.

We often accuse someone close to us of suffering from ‘selective hearing.’ The survey reported 45.3% stating that they believe their spouse does not hear the requests to do household chores yet 77.5% say they can hear them fixing a snack!



complaints, a 14% increase on the previous year. Christchurch, the second largest city, reported around 11,000 complaints, an increase of 10% on the previous year and the country’s third largest city, Manukau, reported 10,509 complaints which was a 10% increase on last year. Wellington City received 5105 complaints, an increase of 6% on the previous year. All councils cited stereo/music noise as being the number one complaint.

New Zealand’s environmental health experts are aware that noise pollution continues to grow and noise guidelines, standards and policies need to be reviewed. However in this country, the non-auditory health effects of community noise have yet to be acknowledged in legislation.

## QUIZ

Bay Audiology is offering three readers the opportunity to have a free hearing test and a set of Party Plugs (valued @ \$110) at any one of their 60 locations around New Zealand.

Question:

### What date is Noise Awareness Day?

Please send your answer on the back of an envelope with your name, address & contact number to: Vibrations Quiz, c/- The NFD, PO Box 37729, Parnell, Auckland.



## SNIPPETS

### NEW ADVOCACY ROLE @ NFD

The National Foundation for the Deaf (NFD) has appointed Chris Peters in a newly created role of Advocacy Project Manager.

His role involves setting up an advocacy service within the foundation and on behalf of the NFD's member groups.

Chris has come from a background in journalism, having worked with the NZ Press Association and as a foreign correspondent. Prior to joining the NFD Chris handled public affairs for the Hearing Association of New Zealand.

### BUSES TO INTRODUCE SYSTEMS FOR HEARING IMPAIRED

The New Zealand Transport Agency has released new standards for public bus services to improve accessibility and increase usage. Consideration has been given to the hearing impaired and journey information will now be presented on an electronic display including the route being taken and current location of the bus. It is hoped this will provide confidence to the user and help to ensure they don't get off at the wrong stop which may present safety issues, particularly at night.

Services for the hearing impaired may also extend to an electronic display of the correct fare to be paid.

The NZTA is encouraging regional councils to implement these systems by the end of 2009.

### CONGRATULATIONS TO DR RON GOODEY

Dr Goodey was made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to otolaryngology in the New Year honours. During his 50 years in medicine Dr Goodey has pioneered the cochlear implant surgery, was instrumental in establishing a database of deaf children in the Auckland region and set up the country's first ear, nose and throat medical and surgical training programme.

His wife, Lesley has served as president of the NFD and continues to be a trustee.

### KNOW AN UP AND COMING MUSICIAN?

Titirangi Music Festival organisers are offering a lucky artist or band the chance to win the Ultimate Survival Package valued at over \$4000! This includes a full day's recording session, fully mastered CDs with artwork and even a CD release party.

Also available is an Industry Survival Package, which contains tips and information about how to launch into the music industry. To enter the competition visit [www.titirangifestival.com](http://www.titirangifestival.com)

DISCLAIMER: Vibrations aims to share views and opinions from a broad range of people and organisations on matters affecting deaf and hearing impaired New Zealanders. The stories that appear in this publication are not necessarily the views held by the NFD.

NFD member groups are:

• Hearing Association of NZ • NZ Federation for Deaf Children Inc • NZ Audiological Society • NZ Acoustical Society Inc • Deafness Research Foundation • NZ Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery



- ★ Lip-reading would be an advantage
- ★★ Take earplugs at the very least
- ★★★ Boisterous but not too bad
- ★★★★ Comfortable conversation
- ★★★★★ The place to be and be heard

In each issue of Vibrations we feature some of the restaurants that have been rated for noise by members of the public. (See the full list on [www.acoustics.ac.nz](http://www.acoustics.ac.nz)) If you want to rate a restaurant just answer seven simple questions relating to how sound levels affected your dining experience. The data will be processed by the NZ Acoustical Society leading to a star rating for each restaurant. People interested in participating should contact Christa at the NFD or visit [www.acoustics.ac.nz](http://www.acoustics.ac.nz) to download the rating sheet.

**Imbibe**  
Mt Maunganui ★★

**The Cow**  
Queenstown ★★★★★

## Call for subtitles on DVDs

Martin Wall enjoys watching DVDs and gets several out of his local library in Palmerston North each week. However, when he gets home he often finds they are unwatchable.

Martin, who lost his hearing six years ago, through a middle ear infection, relies heavily on subtitles to enjoy watching movies. While he has a cochlear implant this only delivers limited hearing in one ear and he finds the dialogue difficult to follow.

Martin said his weekly trek to the library has turned into a hugely frustrating exercise and he hopes to get his local library to label DVDs indicating that they do not have subtitles.

He surveyed around 100 DVDs and found that 45% did not have subtitles and others had the information obscured by labels. Under Martin's system all DVDs that do not contain captioning or subtitles would have a sticker placed on the spine of the DVD case with "NST" (No Sub Titles) printed on it. Then, at a glance, anyone requiring those functions would know not to waste their time taking out a movie that they couldn't watch.

"There are many deaf and hearing impaired people who would benefit from the uptake of this idea and it would also serve the larger community. We all get old and most of us lose a degree of hearing," said Martin.

Martin would ultimately like to see a system identifying which DVDs have subtitles implemented by all libraries in the country.

If you have had a similar experience and would like to help Martin on this mission you can contact him on fax (06) 356 2978 or PO Box 738, Palmerston North.



## CONGRATULATIONS

### OUR \$20 TELEPHONE DONATION WINNER

Congratulations to **Mrs Suzanne Hyndman** who is the recent lucky winner of supermarket and MTA vouchers. As part of the NFD's fundraising efforts, all people who donate \$20 to the foundation, through the ongoing telemarketing programme, go into a draw to win \$1000 of vouchers. To make a donation, please call 0900 66610, 0900 66620, or 0900 66650 (for \$10, \$20 or \$50).

### CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to **Mrs J Patterson, C Revell and A&J Griffin** who are the winners of the book *Deaf Sentence* by David Lodge, kindly provided by Random House.

*It's not the years in your life that count  
but the life in your years.*

Abraham Lincoln

QUOTE