

Disabled given the chance to get their stories across

by Eleanor Woods

Photographs, stories and speakers will bring an insight into living with disabilities to Whangarei during the next few weeks.

Whangarei-based disability awareness group the Tiaho Trust has teamed up with CCS and IHC to bring national roadshow *Our Stories* to town in an effort to shed light on the subject.

The event includes guest speakers with disabilities, set to inspire anyone from schoolchildren to business groups.

"It's all about saying, 'Hey

look, we can do things too,'" co-ordinator Saffron Tyler said.

"We want to get the message out there that these people are a part of society too."

Part of the event is an exhibition called *My name is...*, which breathes life into documentary-maker Glen Busch's book *The Man With No Arms and Other Stories*.

The exhibition tells the stories of nine disabled people and features compelling photographs by Hanne Johnsen.

It is a candid insight into life, work, family,

relationships, parenthood and of wanting to be treated like everyone else in a world that still sees them as different.

The roadshow also offers workshops for schools and employers, with guest speakers such as Jonny Wilkinson of the Tiaho Trust.

"I have cerebral palsy myself so I'm passionate about the rights of disabled people," he said.

"We strive to make Northland a less disabling community by trying to improve information and services. Up to 20 per cent of

New Zealanders are disabled in some way."

The event has already travelled from Dunedin to Pukekohe.

"It's a massive educational event that brings resources together. It was a great opportunity for us to get on board and make a difference," Mrs Tyler said.

■ *Our Stories* is open to the public from 10am to 4pm on weekdays and 1pm to 4pm on weekends, starting this Saturday and running until August 15. Reyburn House Art Gallery is on Reyburn House Lane, at Whangarei's Town Basin.



MESSAGE: Northland Society of Arts member Richard Cranenburg helps to hang the *Our Stories* exhibition at Reyburn House in Whangarei.

PICTURE / JOHN STONE