

The last word

For this year's Napier Life we would like to give our 'last word' to entrepreneurial local businessman and inspiring Art Deco advocate Neville Smith.

editorial rick hopkinson / **pictures** paul wilson

For many people in New Zealand the name GEON is synonymous with Napier's world famous GEON Art Deco Weekend. That's hardly surprising considering the local branch of the international printing group has been an integral part of the weekend's growing success for nearly 15 years.

Formerly known as Brebner Print, GEON has just committed to a further five years naming rights sponsorship of the popular four-day event. Regional manager Neville Smith believes this undertaking epitomises the philosophy of giving something back to the community that supports you. "We've been in business here in Napier for 30 years now and it's great to support an event that everyone can participate in, for all classes," Neville explains. "I believe it's all about supporting one another in a local business sense. Art Deco provides a massive boost to the local economy so the more we can get behind it, the more our city progresses. Everyone is a winner here."

Neville openly encourages others to share in this traditional way of doing business. Loyalty, relationship and mutual support are rarities in today's 'get rich quick' commercial society but it is these traits that we believe Neville personifies in business and in pleasure. It would be impossible to calculate his hours and hours of voluntary work around the Art Deco arena. He is probably most famous for the pivotal role he plays in bringing the Royal New Zealand Navy back to the Port of Napier each February.

It was 79 years ago that the crew and officers of the HMS Veronica came to the aid of the citizens of Napier after the devastating 1931 earthquake. Today their predecessors return each year to commemorate the event in style, introducing their own unique, colourful blend of pomp and ceremony to the proceedings. Neville is now an honorary

Lieutenant Commander RNZNVR and acts as the local liaison officer for the Navy.

Once again he points out another surprising win, win situation for the Art Deco Trust and its Royal guests. "Napier gets the support of the Royal Navy and they in turn have a boosted recruitment interest from local youth," Neville says. "Through the Navy's huge profile during the GEON Art Deco Weekend, this region has now become one of their highest recruitment areas per head of population in the country."

In 2010 a group of international GEON executives including CEO Graham Morgan, flew into Napier to experience a GEON Art Deco Weekend for themselves. "The first and longest lasting impression we all took away was the pride and passion of all those involved," said Graham. "We were all taken away with many of the events but just the overall vibrancy and atmosphere made for an incredible weekend. I have no doubt that as an event the GEON Art Deco Weekend firmly puts Napier and Hastings on the map for people far and wide. I am sure that as an event it will continue to grow and be successful for many years to come and I have every intention of returning."

Equally fitting with GEON's continued support of heritage and preservation is their latest commitment to the Forest Stewardship Council. As the only printer in Hawke's Bay to guarantee that the paper they print on comes from a renewable source, GEON are leading the way locally and throughout New Zealand when it comes to fitting in with Government mandates for sustainability.

So it's hardly surprising to report Neville Smith's final words for the readers of this year's edition of Napier Life: "What goes around comes around."

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Below and right:
Honorary Lieutenant Commander
Neville Smith (glasses) on parade.

