

# Uplifting women in need

By Steph Bell-Jenkins

Marie Coles and her friends Brigid Morton and Natalie Davis had to giggle when they came across a card from a Huntly woman while sorting donated bras last week:

"Those post-menopausal hormones keep changing the shape and size...when will it stop?!"

Luckily, one woman's breast-changes are another woman's blessing thanks to the Uplift Project, which collects new and second-hand bras and sends them off to women in disadvantaged communities around the globe.

Marie, who lives in Cambridge and works at a local travel agency, said her cousin Pauline Watson, Uplift's national coordinator, inspired her to begin coordinating Waikato collections six months ago.

"My cousin went to Fiji a few years ago to help distribute the bras. She said it's one of the most rewarding things she's ever done. It was hard work, and hot, but the appreciation was huge – women were whooping, crying and hugging – they were so excited to now be owning a well-made bra, that fits them and is pretty!"

Bras donated by the Uplift Project give women dignity, control breast swing, and can help prevent medical issues such as fungal infections, rashes and abscesses in humid climates.

"You walk differently if you're not wearing a bra and you certainly wouldn't be playing sport," Marie said.

"It's also giving women empowerment. In some countries in Africa they find that the cases of rape are often higher for women who aren't wearing a bra. And in

some countries girls will probably not go to school as much if they're not feeling comfortable without a bra."

Since 2005 the Uplift Project has distributed more than a million bras to girls and women in 14 countries including Cambodia, Botswana, Pakistan and many Pacific Island nations.

Last week Marie, Brigid and Natalie spent an evening sorting and labelling the 1000 bras they have stockpiled from all over the Waikato over the past three months and packing them into banana boxes.

Now, the local trio is keen to hear from anyone who could help get the precious cargo overseas.

"We've got plenty of places to send them and we've got coordinators to distribute them on arrival, but it's getting them from Cambridge," said Marie.

Freight fees, custom charges, fumigation and

dock fees could quickly add up, she said, not to mention petrol costs for local distributors.

"We'd be interested to hear from anybody who has a business where they're sending containers up to the Pacific Islands or Africa or any Third World countries and might have a bit of room for us to squeeze some stuff in, or yachties who could maybe

take a couple of boxes."

In Cambridge, donations to the Uplift project can be made at Helloworld Cambridge, Herbert Morton or 127

Maungakawa Rd. For more information visit [www.upliftbras.org](http://www.upliftbras.org) or follow them on Facebook – Upliftbras Waikato.

