

# Hi-tech to fixing kids' bikes

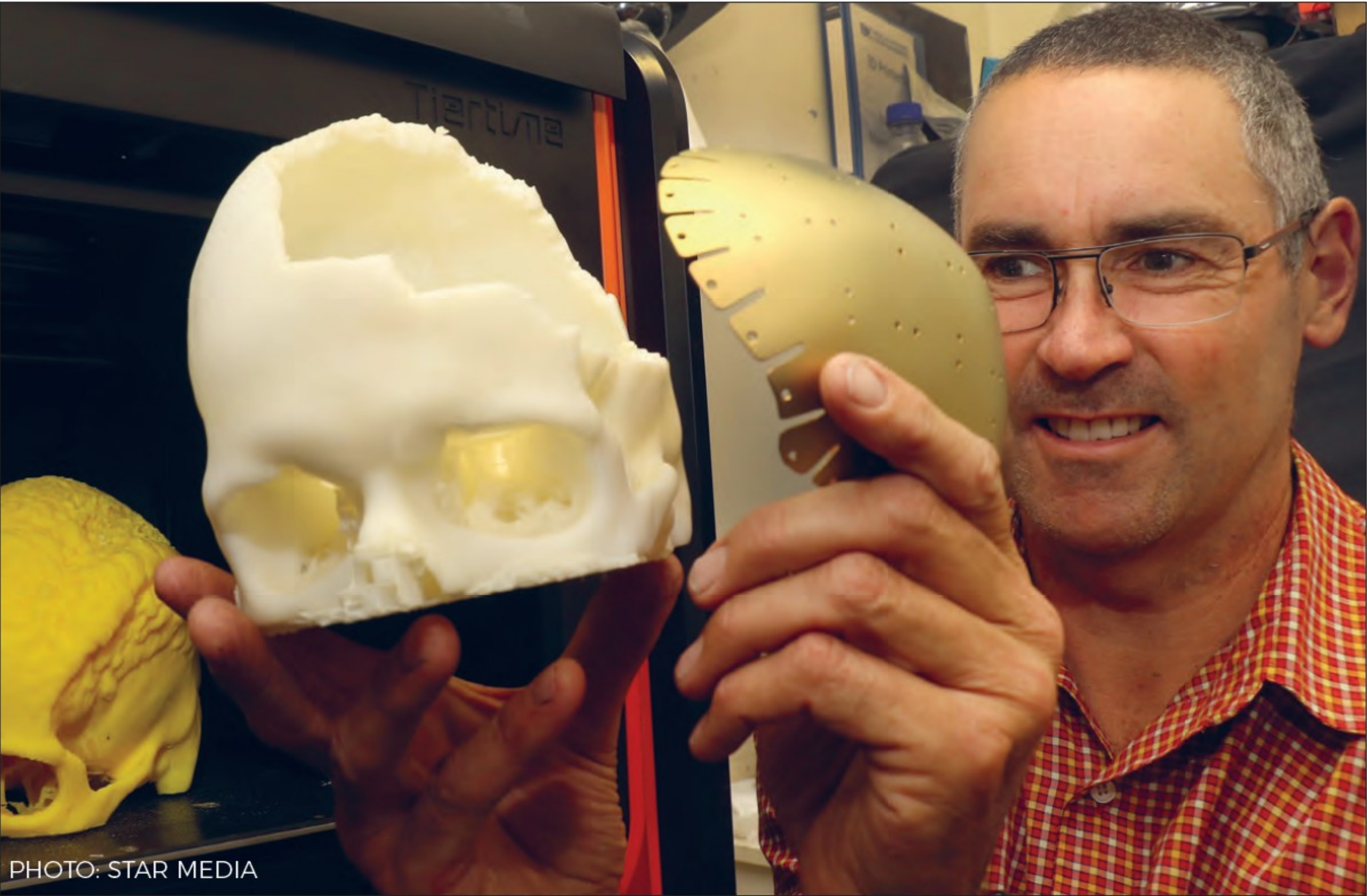


PHOTO: STAR MEDIA

■ By Emily Moorhouse

WHEN STEVEN Muir isn't testing X-ray machines and printing 3D models for surgery at the hospital he's busy fixing up bikes for the community.

Muir is the founder of the Aranui Bike Fix-up Project, a group that meets every Thursday afternoon to restore old bikes and teach youth how to be handy with bike tools.

You'll rarely see Muir driving his car. Instead he zips across town on his ebike, towing six bikes ready to be restored on his trailer.

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## Volunteers needed to grow project

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Biking is second nature to Muir. Growing up in Gore he would ride his bike to kindergarten at four-years-old by himself. "I loved that sense of independence and freedom," he said.

"In my late teens I started to extend my abilities."

In the early 90s Muir developed an interest in sustainability after reading a book titled *Green Christianity*, which talked about the importance of looking after God's creation.

He soon realised this was an important part of his journey and started up Cycling Church in the 2000s, an idea that stemmed from sitting in church, bored, wishing he was out on his bike.

"I wanted to connect that feeling of being alive with my spiritual journey," he said.

The Cycling Church was a hit and grew quickly with people enjoying getting outdoors every Sunday to ride.

"A lot of people have that feeling of well-being with being outdoors," he said.

"It's good for people."

During this time Muir even wrote a book which he named *PROSACC* (Profound Revelations of Sunday Afternoon Cycling Church) before starting up an inner-city east cycle group based in Phillipstown.

After 10 years of successfully running this, Muir moved onto his next venture, the Aranui Bike



Fixup Project after seeing a need for affordable bike repairing in the community.

"I thought something out east of the city would be really valuable for that part of town so it had been on the radar for long time."

Muir had friends who just moved back to New Zealand from India and had a spare shipping container which they agreed to loaning to him as a place to store bikes.

And with Muir's church having finished earthquake renovations and offering a space for him in the backyard as well as some volunteers, the bike fix-up project was able to launch in 2020.

The workshops that run from 3-6pm every Thursday involve people taking in their bikes to be fixed free of charge or they can select a bike that has been donated to the project and have that restored for them.

Muir and his volunteers also mentor young kids that attend the workshops and teach them skills to fix bikes themselves.

He said a lot of kids don't get to be in the outdoors these days so giving them that experience was really valuable and helped them flourish.

"It's very satisfying, mostly," he said.

"You get your 10 people that you help on a Thursday and they

go away with big smiles on their faces and full of thanks and really appreciative of what we're doing so it is a really rewarding thing to be involved in."

Muir has used his passion for biking and sustainability to encourage others to switch from being behind the wheel to getting out on their bikes.

To help with this he has designed and built mini-trailers out of aluminium for towing behind bikes as a way to transport things, selling 620 over the past 15 years.

"Getting people on bikes has the best environmental impact on almost anything," he said.

"It's a very rich way of travel-

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ling, rather than getting in a car and resenting the journey time and [being] desperate to get to the destination you actually enjoy the journey along the way."

Muir said while the project is very fulfilling it's a challenge getting all the bikes fixed in a short amount of time with only one other regular volunteer.

"When you've got 20 people coming to the workshop with two volunteers it can get chaotic," he said.

"Getting more volunteers is a key thing to help us grow with what we're doing."

While the environmental aspect of getting people on bikes is appealing to Muir, he said seeing the community come together and watching kids develop in confidence and skills was the best part of the project.

"You can get a team of regular kids back and we have given them a spanner and said undo that nut and they've never even held a spanner in their hand before and now they're getting to the stage where they can do puncture repairs and replace cables and actually restore bikes," he said.

"It's very satisfying."

### HELPING

**HAND:** The Aranui Bike Fixup group founder Steven Muir at work getting a bicycle roadworthy. PHOTO: STAR MEDIA