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Waihi Ward Reflections

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Forum with a difference inspires young leader

What does hanging out with MPs in Parliament have in common with painting fences along a Stokes Valley Street?

Waihi Central School teacher Natasha (Tash) Staheli-Lowe, 22, did both as part of the Aspiring Leaders Forum in Wellington from June 30 to July 3. One of about 150 delegates aged from 18 to 26, she was nominated by the Council and awarded a \$1200 grant from District's social initiatives fund to take part.

While there may be plenty of leadership training courses, this is an annual event with a difference – based around servant-hearted leadership. The philosophy of the organising trust is that “good leadership requires more than an impressive resume and a strong personality. There must be something in you that can justify the loyalty and commitment of those who follow.”

So the forum's subtitle “on faith and values” involved exploring personal character foundations, and ways using these to inspire and enrich the

lives of other people, says Tash. “It really highlighted the fact that I have the opportunity every day to make a difference in the lives of the students I teach.”

Keynote speakers included scientist, inventor and social entrepreneur Sir Ray Avery, journalist Rob Harley, Auckland NRL 9s General Manager Trina Tamati, and Deputy Prime Minister Bill English. On a visit to Parliament, Tash and her assigned small group talked with Police Minister Judith Collins and Hamilton East MP David Bennett.

In contrast, one afternoon was spent in community service. “Each year the Aspiring Leaders tackle a different street in Stokes Valley, to assist the residents in beautifying and looking after their properties,” says Tash. “I painted fences along our street, while other members of my group helped to mow lawns and take rubbish away. It was awesome to see delegates spending time with the children, too.”

She says the forum made her feel “even more inspired to be a teacher,

and to be more involved in community-based projects”. As the teacher in charge of Enviroschools at Waihi Central, her work with the student Envirogroup already involves helping with projects in the community as well as in the school: such as planting along the Mangatoetoe stream with members of Waihi's Habitat Enhancement and Landcare Partnership.

That sort of commitment from a first-year teacher impressed Councillor Max McLean (himself a teacher) when nominations for the forum were sought. And it's not the first time Tash has stood out as a promising leader – she received a Hauraki District Young Achiever award in 2012, when she was Waihi College head girl.

She says her mentors have included other teachers – at Waihi College, Denise Casey; and now, inspiring community-minded colleagues like Annie Sims and Rachael Coll.

During the forum, Tash also made some amazing friendships with members of her small group.

“I look forward to keeping in contact



INSPIRED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE: Natasha (Tash) Staheli-Lowe

with them “to share ideas to keep me motivated and positive about what I can do as a servant-hearted leader.”

Waihi kids flock to the Library during school holidays

Birds on tables, birds lining the walls, birds perched on bookshelves, and even a wrybill starring in her own book – have all been at the Waihi Library these school holidays.

The feathered visitors were part of a “Flock” of migratory waders being created by school and community groups in a Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre project to draw attention to their declining populations and the need to protect their habitats.

On two afternoons, children could paint and decorate a wooden cutout bird to add to the flock – now numbering almost 1000.

The artists will be able to track their creation's migration around the country online, and they also learnt some amazing facts about the birds from the Shorebird Centre's primary school educator Krystal Glen.

Waihi librarian Karen Wickliffe said every holiday programme is “totally different”, thanks to fantastic volunteer support from the local community.

Librarians would love to hear from anyone who has an indoor skill or interest they're keen to share with school-age children.



FLIGHTS OF FANCY: Odin Collins and Owen Goddard create birds for “The Flock”.

Chance to climb your family tree

Want to fossick out information about your ancestors but not really sure where to start? To celebrate Family History Month in August, the Waihi Library is hosting free drop-in sessions every Thursday. Between 10am and 2pm, two members of the New Zealand Society of Genealogists' Waihi branch will be available to give you a hand up your family tree, using library resources such as ancestry.com. Branch convenor Harriet Taylor says it's usually good to “start with yourself” and work back, a generation at a time. Then people might decide to follow one particular line.

“We advocate using free resources before paid services. But with such a huge amount of information accessible on the internet, there's a lot of misinformation, and it's important to verify what you find.”

Residents who come during the library sessions should bring pen and paper, and a brief summary with dates and places (rather than multiple pages) of what they know about their family and what they want to know. A laptop or tablet is recommended if you have one – or a USB stick if you'd like to use the library computer reserved for the purpose and you have a desktop at home.

The initiative is a way the Genealogical Society can make a community contribution to Family History Month, not a recruitment drive, says Harriet. However if you “get hooked” there is opportunity to join, and take advantage of guest speaker presentations, meetings and seminars.

Lions help will top off barbie

Barbecue weather may not be forecast quite yet, but in readiness, the community barbecue at Gilmour Lake is set to have a shelter erected over it.

The Waihi ward funded barbecue was installed last December, after a similar public facility was placed at Paeroa's Railway Reserve the previous year by the local Lions Club.

Now, the Waihi Lions are working with the Council to get the lakeside barbecue roofed, to provide some shelter from rain and sun. Councillor Max McLean says the planned structure will be virtually the same as the Paeroa one – with Lions Club support to be acknowledged on an attached plaque.

