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Paeroa's main street glow-up



PBA's Rhys Charmichael, Jodie Phillips, and Rosie Scott say the town's shopping centre is due for a makeover.

By ALICE PARMINTER

Paeroa's shopping district is getting a community-led makeover.

The Main Street Clean-Up will be taking place on April 12 on the section of Normanby Rd/Belmont Rd that runs between Victoria St and Marshall St.

Event organiser, the Paeroa Business Association (PBA), is calling on businesses and locals to help out with the working bee, doing tasks like brushing down shopfronts, clearing cobwebs, cleaning windows, and general frontage tidy-ups.

Shops along the main street are being approached by the association to ask them to participate in the event.

The working bee is stage one in the PBA's plan to beautify Paeroa's shopping district.

"We're working to add value to the town, to add some personality to the main street, where it might be more inviting for people to stop," committee member Rhys Carmichael said.

"And we're also well down the line of the community lighting project for the main street - we've got some good grants out there at the moment waiting for consideration."

Also still in the pipeline is the community radio project, which Rhys said would add atmosphere to the street.

"We do need the support of local businesses and shopkeepers and everyone to do their part," Rhys said of the clean-up day.

"The more people that can come along and help on the day and want to be involved, the better."

CONTINUED ON P2

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Street clean-up planned

CONTINUED FROM P1
Committee member Rosie Scott said the association also had eyes on specific parts of the street which need extra attention.
The PBA is in discussions with shop owners and a young local artist to develop temporary murals on boarded-up shopfronts, for example, and there is a project underway for other beautification initiatives once the clean up is complete.
The PBA, which took over from the former Positive Paeroa community group in September, 2024, already had some wins for the town, Rosie said.
"I think with any transitioning organisation it has been a hard year [with] a little bit of a learning curve for us... but we've progressed past that and we

are now in a position of actually getting things in place," she said.
The PBA had seen a lot of success with its Business After 5 and Women's Breakfast meetings, she said, and with already-completed projects such as new town flags and the mural on the side of E Ronnie's Cafe, spearheaded by former committee member Linley Rose.
"We're also working on a website, which will have things going on in town, places where people can connect and key contacts," Rhys said.
"Because that's what we're here for. We want to be the advocate, the organisation that's helping businesses in town grow and prosper."
DETAILS: For more information about the Main Street Clean-Up on April 12, email enquiries@paeroa.org.nz or find the Paeroa Business Association on Facebook.

In Brief

OFFENDER ARRESTED
Police received a report of a possible fire-arm discharge at a commercial premises on Ngati Maru Highway near Thames around 2.30am on April 2. The offender had fled in a vehicle, a Police spokesperson said, which was later sighted on SH26. The vehicle crashed in order to evade spikes set on the road and one person was detained. Police are making enquiries.

MOTOR VEHICLE CRASHES
Emergency services were called to a two-car collision at the intersection of Kerepēhi Town Rd and SH2 on April 1 around 3:15pm. One person was trapped and had to be extricated from the vehicle before being transferred to an ambulance, a Fire and Emergency NZ spokesperson confirmed.

MAYORAL FUND CLOSES
Twenty-one households and 12 businesses have received financial support through the Hauraki District Council Mayoral Disaster Relief Fund in the wake of the January 21 storm. The grants covered essential costs including food, accommodation, utilities, debris removal, and other expenses that arose directly from the storm. The relief fund contained a \$14,000 donation from Woolworths and \$245 in public donations, as well as \$100,000 from the government. All applications have now been assessed and funds allocated to those who met the criteria.

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Thames Tides																																											
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<p>TIME DIFFERENCES FOR OTHER PLACES</p> <p>To determine tide times at the following places, add (+) or subtract (-) the given time difference from the Thames times listed in the calendar.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>PLACE</th> <th>Hr</th> <th>Mn</th> <th>Hr</th> <th>Mn</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Coromandel</td> <td>-0</td> <td>04</td> <td>-0</td> <td>03</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Whitianga</td> <td>-0</td> <td>01</td> <td>-0</td> <td>06</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tairua</td> <td>+0</td> <td>10</td> <td>+0</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Whangamata</td> <td>-0</td> <td>03</td> <td>-0</td> <td>06</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Waihi Beach</td> <td>-0</td> <td>21</td> <td>-0</td> <td>16</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>														PLACE	Hr	Mn	Hr	Mn	Coromandel	-0	04	-0	03	Whitianga	-0	01	-0	06	Tairua	+0	10	+0	20	Whangamata	-0	03	-0	06	Waihi Beach	-0	21	-0	16
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Donation boosts rail trail recovery

By KELLEY TANTAU

A major donation of recycled materials is set to boost the recovery of the Hauraki Rail Trail, as efforts continue to repair sections damaged by the severe summer storm.

More than 3,700 fence posts, worth around \$100,000, have been donated to help repair the 24km stretch between Paeroa and Waihi, one of the areas hardest hit by the January weather event.

Manufactured by Future Post from recycled soft plastics, the posts will be used in ongoing rebuilding work after the trail reopened in time for Easter.

Hauraki Rail Trail Charitable Trust chief executive Diane Drummond said the "generous" donation was a "much-needed shot in the arm" for trail management.

"We had just paid the last account for [Cyclone] Gabrielle repairs in December, 2025, and the trail had never looked so good," Diane said.

Then, the January 21-22 storm hit, causing widespread damage across the region and forcing the closure of key sections of the popular cycle trail, with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment assessing the impact at around \$20,000 for every day the trail

remained closed.

However, there has been progress, with the trust confirming the section between Waikino and Waihi - including the Karangahake Gorge tunnel - has now reopened to the public. Users were asked to be aware that some areas remained "a little rough under wheel or foot" as repairs continued.

"We didn't want to leave it closed while we worked through scoping and the funding of the repairs," Diane said. "The works undertaken so far have just allowed us to open, but not undertake the repairs and resurfacing required to bring this back to its former glory."

"We had just paid the last account for Gabrielle repairs, and the trail had never looked so good."

- Diane Drummond

The \$100,000 fence post donation, facilitated by the Packaging Forum through its Soft Plastic Recycling Scheme, was announced in Paeroa on March 17.

Packaging Forum chief executive Craig Miller said it had been "incredibly tough" to see the trail damaged again after Cyclone Gabrielle.

"The Hauraki Rail Trail is more than a cycle path, it's a lifeline for the communities it connects," he said. "We're proud to be making a practical donation to help rebuild the trail, using posts that are designed to last and that keep valuable plastic out of landfill."



In total, the fence post donation will keep more than 5.5 million plastic bags out of landfill.

Photos: SUPPLIED

Manufactured by New Zealand business Future Post, the donated post products are made from 100 per cent recycled plastic waste, including soft plastic collected through the Soft Plastic Recycling Scheme bins at supermarkets around the country.

The posts each use around 1,500 soft plastic items, meaning the donation will keep more than 5.5 million bags - about 36 tonnes - from landfill.



RIGHT: A damaged section of the Hauraki Rail Trail.

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PI says Sara Niethe case still not forgotten

By KELLEY TANTAU

Twenty-three years after Sara Niethe was murdered in rural Hauraki, a renewed public appeal has brought her name back into focus - something investigator Bruce Currie says shows the case is far from forgotten.

Mr Currie, a licensed private investigator and former Detective Senior Sergeant with New Zealand Police, has spent the past six years working pro bono for Sara's family.

He said the response to this year's anniversary had been "heartening," with a surge of messages, memories, and new information emerging from across Ngātea, Kerepēhi, and the wider Hauraki Plains.

Sara, a 31-year-old mum-of-three, disappeared in March, 2003, after visiting a property in Kaihere. She never returned home, and her body has never been found. More than two decades on, Mr Currie believed the passage of time may finally prompt those who have stayed silent to come forward.

"People who may have been frightened in 2003 might now feel safe to talk. Others who were teenagers then are now adults with families of their own, and they understand what Sara's children have lost," he said. "Relationships end, people move away, and sometimes secrets that were kept for years finally get told."

According to Mr Currie, the case, and the circumstances



Hauraki mum-of-three Sara Niethe was killed in Kaihere in 2003. Her body has never been found. Photo: SUPPLIED

surrounding the conviction of Mark Pakenham, remained "disturbing".

Pakenham pleaded guilty to manslaughter in 2013 and was sentenced to six years and seven months' imprisonment.

He was released on parole in 2016, having never disclosed the location of Sara's body.

Mr Currie said since his release, Pakenham has claimed he fabricated the account he gave to police and the court in order to avoid a murder conviction.

Mr Currie also pointed to a recorded 2009 conversation, made before Pakenham was charged, in which he allegedly told an associate he knew where Sara's body was and claimed the only reason he had not been charged with murder was because "they can't find the body".

Mr Currie also said newly obtained documents from the Hamilton High Court raised further questions about how Pakenham's guilty plea came about. According to Mr Cur-

rie, the documents showed the court accepted a version of events in which Sara was said to have consented to the fatal methamphetamine injection, despite, he said, there being no evidence of consent in the agreed summary of facts.

"These documents confirm what we have long believed," Mr Currie said. "The consent claim had no evidentiary basis. The sentencing judge himself was uncomfortable with what the defence avoided.

"The system was gamed, and Sara's family have paid the price for 23 years."

Back in February, 2023, Mr Currie helmed a search for Sara alongside search and rescue experts in "dense" terrain in Kaihere.

The area of interest was Oh-inewai Rd, a steep, narrow, gravel stretch of road off State Highway 27, that was said to be familiar to Pakenham.

Mr Currie told *The Profile* last week that while there were no new searches currently planned, they were "working hard" on reviewing the evidence, talking to the local community, and "putting pressure" on the Solicitor-General.

He is also appealing to anyone who lived in Ngātea, Kerepēhi, Kaihere, or the wider Hauraki area in 2003 to cast their minds back to that time.

He is particularly interested in hearing from anyone who saw or heard something unusual around the last weekend of March, 2003; heard rumours about where Sara might have been buried; heard Pakenham or anyone else talk about what happened; noticed odd behaviour - someone digging, burning, or acting strangely on rural properties; saw Sara's mother's car (1987 Honda Civic hatchback) after March 30, 2003; or hard local talk about a burial site "where a body would never be found".

DETAILS: Information can be provided confidentially to Bruce via bruce@brucecurrie.co.nz

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Carson to kick off at International Rugby Academy

RUGBY

By DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

Carson Fletcher knows what it means to face adversity.

"In 2024, I faced one of my biggest challenges when I broke my collarbone," the 16-year-old rugby player from Thames High School told *The Profile*.

"This was a really tough period for me as I had to spend a long time recovering and watching from the sidelines instead of being able to play."

Through the frustration, the young athlete said he tried to stay involved and helped manage and support his team wherever he could.

It taught him a lot about resilience, patience, and the importance of being a team player "even when I couldn't contribute on the field", he said.

By the time the next season rolled around, Carson said he was "fully motivated" to head back stronger and "pushed myself even harder" in training.

He used the setback as motivation to "grow and become a better player", he said.

It is what makes his recent achievement one to truly celebrate.

The promising rugby talent was selected to attend the International Rugby Academy of New Zealand in Wellington for an advanced training programme starting this week.

He said he felt proud of himself and what made the moment



Carson Fletcher is off to the International Rugby Academy of New Zealand in Wellington. Photos: SUPPLIED

"even more special" was to know his efforts paid off. His goal was to "push myself outside my comfort zone" on his quest to improve and refine his rugby skills.

"Most importantly, I want to use this opportunity to grow as both a player and a person, and to learn how to take my rugby further in

the future."

The rugby star, who is also a sports leader at Thames High, said the role allowed him to encourage others to get involved in sport and help them build confidence.

He also represented Thames Valley in the Under 14s in Taupō and the Thames Valley Rugby Un-

der 16s Skulls development programme, he said.

The experiences strengthened his desire to continue to improve and "reach my goals in rugby", he said.

He was excited and inspired to train with coaches who were former All Blacks such as Rodney



So'oialo, he said.

"It's a great opportunity to learn from some of the best in the game, and to gain insight into what it takes to perform at an elite level," he said.

Carson believes he "always gives 100 per cent" in every rugby training session or game.

It's what gives him an edge. "What I believe makes me stand out is my strong work ethic and determination."

"I also think my rugby smarts set me apart, as I have a good understanding of the game, can read situations well, and make smart decisions under pressure."

The way he stayed motivated when faced with challenges was to picture himself as though he had already achieved his goals, he said.

"I use this as a way to keep pushing forward, even when things get difficult, as it reminds me of what I am working towards," he said.

"This mindset helps me stay focused, positive, and determined to improve, no matter the obstacles I face."

Paeroa Amateur Athletics Club holds memorial ribbon day

ATHLETICS

The annual Paeroa Ribbon Day was at the Paeroa Amateur Athletics Club on Saturday 7 March was t.

This year the event was renamed the Kevin Sharp Memorial Ribbon Day to acknowledge the passing of the former life member late in 2025.

As part of the day's usual track and field events (for grades Tiny Tot through to grade 14), the Kevin Sharp Memorial Race was run for the first time.

Open to past and present club members, runners of

varying ages and abilities completed a 1500m circuit of the track. Each received a ribbon and certificate on completion.

"There was a real sense of connection and reflection," the club said.

"Runners were heard sharing memories of Kevin and their times at the club. As the final runners came over the line there were high fives and cheering.

"Bev Sharp, Kevin's wife, was in attendance. It was very special and we think Kevin would have loved to see everyone out enjoying a run together."

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You, Me & Tuscany (110 mins) PG. A delicious romantic comedy about one little lie, one large Italian villa, and two people getting lost in the sauce of love. A young woman has abandoned her dreams of becoming a chef and is now drifting through her twenties. When she loses her housing, an encounter with Matteo—a handsome Italian who happens to have a villa sitting empty in Tuscany—she is inspired to jet off for Italy.

The North (132 mins) M. Two old friends are walking 600 kilometers through the Scottish highlands, to reconnect with each other, with nature and with parts of themselves they have lost.

The Super Mario Galaxy Movie (98 mins) PG. A follow up to the 2023 box office smash The Super Mario Bros Movie with this intergalactic sequel, taking elements from the beloved Wii games. Huge with the kids!

The Magic Faraway Tree (110 mins) G. Follows a modern family who find themselves forced to relocate to the remote English countryside and discover a magical tree and its extraordinary and eccentric residents. Adapted from the Enid Blyton book series of the same name.

Tenor: My Name Is Pati (104 mins) PG. Music-packed documentary. Tells the story of Pene and brother Amitai Pati, and their journey from Samoa to platinum-selling success in the trio Sol3 Mio and the world's greatest opera stages. Bursting with humour, heart and soaring performances.

Coming from Friday 24 April: Solo Mio: After being left at the altar in Rome, a man decides to go on his honeymoon alone. **Michael:** The cinematic portrayal of the life and legacy of one of the most influential artists the world has ever known. Tells the story of Michael Jackson's life beyond the music, tracing his journey from the discovery of his extraordinary talent as the lead of the Jackson Five, to the visionary artist whose creative ambition fueled a relentless pursuit to become the biggest entertainer in the world.

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Stuck in the waiting place? Start moving

Chris' Quiz

Weekly quiz compiled by Chris Parminter

- 19, 21 and 25 were the first three albums to be released by which musical artist? a) Adele, b) Beyoncé, or c) Cher?
- The fear of bananas is known as what? a) Bananaphobia, b) Musaphobia, or c) Nanaphobia?
- Who played the character of Tinkerbell in the 1991 film *Hook*? a) Demi Moore, b) Julia Roberts, or c) Michelle Pfeifer?
- True or false: diamonds are capable of burning?
- What is the term used for plants that grow on other plants without harming them?
- The strings on a 'catgut' tennis racket are traditionally made of what? a) Cat intestines, b) cattle/sheep intestines, or c) hemp?
- In which country would you find the world's longest fence? a) Australia, b) Canada, or c) the United States?
- Complete the ring name of the professional wrestler, 'Stone Cold Steve _____'?
- What is the main herb ingredient in a traditional pesto sauce? a) Aniseed, b) basil, or c) coriander?
- The characters pictured below are from which animated anime style TV show from 1990-1991?



ANSWERS: 1 a) Adele; 2 a) Bananaphobia; 3 b) Julia Roberts; 4 True. They are made of pure carbon so are combustible, but it requires temperatures above 763°C; 5 Epiphytes; 6 b) Cattle/sheep intestines; 7 a) Australia. This is a 5.614 km long dingo fence, made from an earlier 'rabbit-proof' fence which had failed; 8. Austn; 9 b) Basil; 10. Samurai Pizza Cats.

OPINION

By MICHAEL WILKES



Have you ever noticed how indecisiveness kills progress?

It happens more often than we'd like to admit. Do I buy a new car or fix the old one? Do I apply for the job or enrol in study? Do I commit to exercise or carry on as I am? And while those questions are different, the stuck feeling is the same.

Dr Seuss, in his classic *Oh, The Places You'll Go*, writes about "The Waiting Place". It's described as this awful limbo,

where everyone is just waiting. Waiting for a train to go, or a phone to ring, or the snow to snow... waiting, waiting, waiting.

Sound familiar? The truth is, indecision is often fuelled by fear. Not fear of the future exactly - but fear of making the wrong choice. So we hover. We stall. We rationalise. We wait.

But there's a powerful shift that happens once the internal battle is over and someone decides. When the mind is made up, courage kicks in. Momentum returns.

You see it all the time - once people get clear on what to do

next, they launch forward.

Sometimes, though, the boldness doesn't come first. It grows in the movement.

Think about a massive ship. You can't steer it while it's sitting still. It can only pivot once it's already moving.

The same is true for us. When we're stuck in the "Waiting Place", sometimes the best thing we can do is just start. Make a move. Take a step.

Even if it's small. Even if you're unsure. Movement creates clarity.

And the beauty is - you can pivot if you need to. You're not locked in. But you're no longer frozen.

So if you've been stuck - tossing around the same question, stuck in fear of getting it wrong - maybe it's time to choose.

Take one brave step in one direction. And trust that, like a ship, you'll be able to adjust course along the way.

You don't have to have it all figured out. But you do have to move.

Michael Wilkes is a youth worker with Thrive Trust, supporting mentoring and resilience programmes across Thames and Paeroa. To support his local youth work or follow stories and insights, find him on social media @michaelwilkes.kiwi. Enjoy these articles? Grab his book The Unschooled Life at michael-wilkes.kiwi.

Pet Profile

Snoopy - the gentle explorer

Snoopy is a sweet, playful pup who has blossomed after a lucky rescue from a scary start in life.

Now thriving and full of love, he's ready to find a forever home where he can be cherished as part of the family.

This quietly confident boy has a calm, gentle nature and settles beautifully during the day.

Independent yet affectionate, Snoopy enjoys his downtime just as much as playtime, delighting in simple joys like exploring the garden or chasing big leaves. On walks, he shows curiosity and natural confidence, often stepping up as a little leader among

his furry friends.

Snoopy is up to date with vaccinations, desexed, and treated for fleas and worms, making him ready to join his new family immediately.

If you're looking for a relaxed but adventurous companion with a thoughtful, loving personality, Snoopy could be the perfect match.

Available for adoption at Thames SPCA - give this charming boy a chance to brighten your home and heart!

DETAILS: <https://www.sPCA.nz/adopt/animal/656510/puppy-snoopy-thames>

- Supplied by Thames SPCA



Snoopy is a quietly confident boy.

Photo: SUPPLIED

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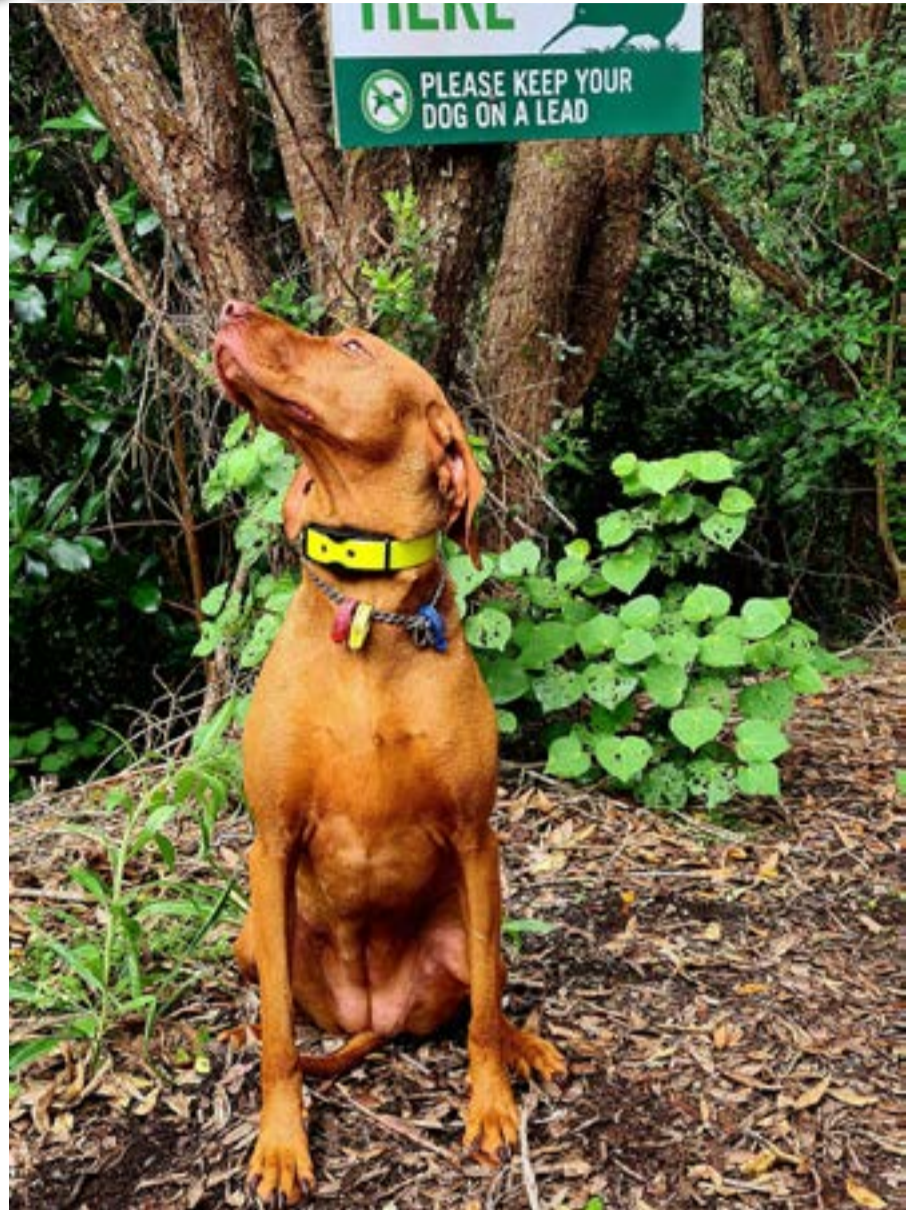
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On the Land



Mike O'Donnell and Pippa Jackson during Kiwi avoidance training, which helps protect native birds and minimises the risk of their dogs injuring or killing kiwi. Photo: SUPPLIED

'KAT' dogs prove to be best in class

Thirty dogs of all ages, shapes and sizes attended free Kiwi Avoidance Training (KAT) at Bennett Rd, Te Mātā, on Auckland Anniversary Day.

Funded by Thames Coast Kiwi Care (TCKC) and provided by Save the Kiwi-accredited trainers, the training supports dog owners to minimise the risk of their dogs injuring or killing kiwi when they go into areas where kiwi live.

TCKC co-ordinator Pippa Jackson and committee member Karen Bennett gave a big thumbs up to the owners who had taken time to bring their dogs to the session.

"Dogs instinctively investigate inter-

esting odour and movement and regardless of their size, breed, training, or temperament, and whether they see kiwi as prey or play, all dogs have the potential to kill a kiwi.

"Thames Coast Kiwi Care is pest trapping over some 5000 hectares of private and conservation land behind Te Mātā, Tapu and Waikawau, including the Papakai Ecological Area, so we're super grateful to the hunters, farmers and pet owners who recognise the importance of helping to protect our native species."

Trainers Christine Friis and Laura Barton, along with Save the Kiwi dog specialist Emma Craig, took dogs and

humans through their paces with good humour and loads of dog training advice. Kiwi don't have breastplates and chest muscles to protect their internal organs so just a gentle nudge from a playful small dog has the potential to crush its very delicate ribcage and internal organs.

During training, an e-collar is put on the dog. The dog is walked past props like a taxidermied kiwi or kiwi nesting material.

If it shows an interest in these objects, it gets a short sharp shock from the trainer, via the collar. The dog is then walked past similar props. If it avoids

them, it has shown good kiwi avoidance behaviour.

Refresher training is held every six, 12 or 24 months, depending on the outcome of the first training, to make sure the dog remembers what it has learnt.

Thames Coast Kiwi Care is always looking for volunteers, along with businesses interested in supporting the project. The organisation currently has more than 60 volunteer trappers working to protect the 5000-hectare project area, checking more than 900 traps twice a month.

DETAILS: Visit www.kiwiavoidancetraining.nz to learn more.

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Rural Life

Fun times, pumpkin

Turua School's annual Autumn Gala and Giant Pumpkin Festival was a fun event, with plenty to see and do. There were rides, bouncy castles, a sandpit dig, and other activities, along with yummy food and plant sales. The displays were the stars of the show - giant pumpkins lined the side of the field ready for weighing, while elsewhere tables held entries for the quirky vegetable competition. Children were also able to submit entries for the Decorate a Gumboot competition, and the Upcycled Garden Art competition. ALICE PARMINTER dug out her gumboots, and popped along.



William and Conner show off their giant produce.

Photos: ALICE PARMINTER



Deputy Principal Amy Rakich gets a soaking at the Dunk a Teacher stand.



Crafty gumboots - fast and slow - on display.



Cohen and Jorja enjoy a fluffy treat.



A quirky vegetable entry.

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Attendance up at Paeroa school

By ALICE PARMINTER

Paeroa primary school is celebrating its success in getting kids back into the classroom.

Miller Avenue School principal, Derek Martin, told *The Profile* attendance rates had increased since the school began offering organised extracurricular activities during morning tea and lunchtime, such as sports, music, and art.

"It's had a wonderful effect, better than I had imagined," he said.

"You can see how happy the kids are - they're not coming back to the classroom wound up or unhappy.

"Their reading, writing, and maths is also improving. I think the two go hand in hand. If you've got kids being ex-

cited to be at school, enjoying their sports and arts, then the chances are that they are likely to also do well in the classroom."

According to the school's attendance management plan, only 51 per cent of students were achieving regular attendance status at the end of term two last year.

"The number of students who have regular attendance is now at an impressive 70 per cent," Derek said.

"Regular attendance" is defined by the Ministry of Education as having fewer than five days' absence per term.

The daily statistics had also improved, with more than 90 per cent of students turning up each day this term - a 10-20 per cent increase from the same time last year.



Waihi Central School students with the creators of *Magic Jack*. Photo: SUPPLIED



Author Dawn McMillan reads *Doctor Grundy's Undies*. Photo: ALICE PARMINTER

Captivating author storytimes

The Hauraki District Libraries had some special storytimes in March. On March 17, Waiomu author Dawn McMillan visited Paeroa Library to read aloud to children from Riverglade Child-care and St Joseph's Catholic School. Dawn, author of the popular *I Need a New Bum* children's book series, read from several of her books. Then on March 18, Waihi Library welcomed author Kirsty Roby and illustrator Tania Pauling for a reading of their book *Magic Jack - The True-ish Story of the Easter Bunny*. The storytime session was thoroughly enjoyed by the students of Waihi Central School, and other attendees.

Staff had felt the change too, Derek said, and were eager to keep it going.

"The staff are offering to run more and more activities because they realize how it benefits the kids... There's a real sense of purpose around the school."

On any given day, students can now be found decorating the courtyard with chalk, learning guitar, or racing around the field for a game of rippa rugby. A sunny lunchtime in March saw teachers running a skipping and dancing session, complete with "loud music and

good vibes". A month before that, the children were practicing their serves for mini-tennis.

"I asked a new kid, 'how are you feeling? Do you like our school?' And he was like, 'I love it,' which was wonderful for me as principal," Derek said.

"And a mum - I asked her how kids were going and she said, 'they just love your school'. And complaints from parents about kids being bullied - we still have them like every other school, but far less.

"I'm not pretending everything's perfect. We have our challenges, but when you're

looking at overall how things are going, we have a lot of very happy kids."

An Education Review Office report from October, 2024, said there were more than 80,000 "chronically absent students" nationwide in term two that year - meaning students were attending school 70 per cent or less of the time. Since then, the Ministry of Education has been working with schools to bring attendance levels back up.

The ministry is aiming for 80 per cent of students to achieve regular attendance status by the year 2030.



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Dr Peter Wass

worth getting your spine assessed.

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We're also pleased to welcome back Dr Peter Wass, who rejoins our team throughout April and May.

It's great to have Pete back in the practice - book in to see him while you can.

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DETAILS: Book your appointment: Phone 868 6665, or www.evergreenchiropractic.co.nz.

- Supplied by Evergreen Chiropractic, Thames

Flu clinic available at Health Ngatea

Greetings to the community. It's that time of the year again where we are running flu clinics to protect against the Influenza Virus.

We will be running these clinics at the practice once again, at the covered area out the front of the building.

Clinics will be available on April 8, 14 and 15.

We will also be offering the Covid Booster to all those who are eligible at the same time that you have your flu shot.

Please give us a call on 07 86 77 521 to book your spot.

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funded influenza vaccine brand (Influvac Tetra), are available for high-risk individuals who meet Pharmac eligibility criteria.

Influvac Tetra can also be purchased by those who do not meet the Pharmac criteria.

- Supplied by Health Ngatea.



Dr Ben is here until Friday April 10th.

Dr Pete's back from Monday 13th



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Best wishes from,
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Crank up for film night

Marking its 12th year, The Big Bike Film Night 2026 is set to ignite the passion of cycling enthusiasts in the Thames-Coromandel region over April 14-17.

The film festival promises “a feast of short films devised and designed for the two-wheel devotee”, organisers said, celebrating the fun, adventure, and inspiration that only bikes can bring.

From humble beginnings in 2015, The Big Bike Film Night has grown into an international phenomenon that brings a love of cycling to cinemas, presenting an array of New Zealand and international movies curated by Taupo based “Film Pedlar” Brett Cotter.

“Stories are at the heart of everything, and our dazzling 2026 collection features nine mesmerizing films; each as are as dynamic and diverse as you could hope for, and all ready to spin your wheels,” he said.

“Audiences will be transported from backyard adventures in New Zealand to the breathtaking landscapes of Norway, to the lush forests of the Canadian West Coast, and we’ll crown things off on the slopes of the punishing Mont Ventoux, in Southern France.”

A highlight of this year’s programme is the world premiere of *Queen of the Mountain*, set in the stunning surrounds of Queenstown. The documentary follows Annie Ford, an adventure activist, as she attempts to break the 24-hour Guinness World Record in downhill mountain biking - all



The Big Bike Film Night is heading to the Coromandel. Photo: SUPPLIED

to raise funds for reforesting the foothills in the Queenstown basin.

Also in the treasure chest of films are a dazzling mountain bike ride exploring the breathtaking landscapes of Norway, embracing the magic of the midnight sun; a life-changing experience for two adventurous women as they embark to cycle to all the ski-fields in New Zealand in one gigantic attempt; and an inspiring film that captures the most brutal, riding conditions imaginable. There’s also a film that playfully delves into the world of those taking cycling to new heights - celebrating fun, silliness, and creativity that comes with pushing boundaries on two wheels; a heart-warming father-and-son journey; and an underdog tale set in the 1990s on the slopes of the punishing Mont

Ventoux, in Southern France, where a battle between two giants is set to take place.

“The power of storytelling is at the forefront of what we offer, and the belief that the humble bicycle can help improve our health and inspire people with where it can take them,” Brett said.

“It’s a real privilege connecting communities with stories that captivate us, that uplift us, and most importantly of all - inspire us to get out and ride.”

DETAILS: The Big Bike Film Night 2026 will be shown in Whangamatā on April 14, 7:00pm at Edisons; in Whitianga on April 15, 6:30pm at the Mercury Twin Cinemas; and in Thames on April 17, 7:00pm at the Thames Civic Centre. For more information and to buy tickets visit www.bigbikefilmmight.nz.



Danika soars at nationals

Danika Bergersen, of Hauraki Plains College, has snapped up second place overall in the 17-29 female group at the BMX National Championships in Te Awamutu on March 20-22. The podium-placer said she raced the “biggest numbers I have ridden in New Zealand” and had fun with her competitors.



Photo: SUPPLIED



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Fill the grid so every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9

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HARD

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HARD

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MEDIUM

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6	5	8	3	9	1	4	7	2
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EASY

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JUMBO CROSSWORD

265

ACROSS

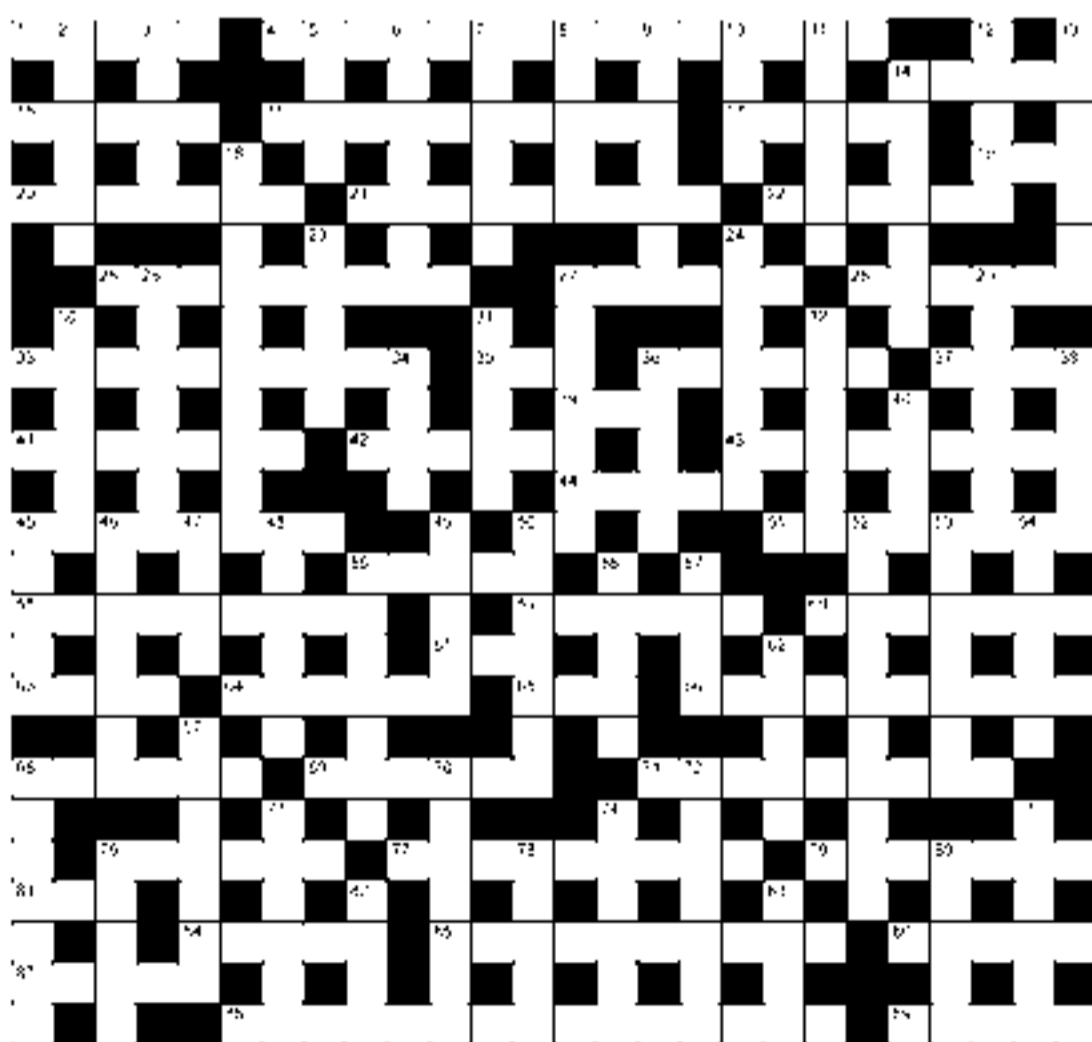
- 1 Wound crusts (5)
- 4 Seafood outlet (4-3-4,4)
- 14 Counterfeit (5)
- 15 Wood pattern (5)
- 16 Payment (10)
- 17 Witty (5)
- 19 Finish (3)
- 20 Bison (7)
- 21 Screamed shrilly (9)
- 22 Showed to be true (6)
- 25 Self-appointed law enforcer (9)
- 27 Subsidised (6)
- 28 Swallowed (6)
- 33 Trial judge (10)
- 35 Tree (3)
- 36 Overexert (6)
- 37 Wet river crossing (4)
- 39 Employment (3)
- 41 Provide the money for (7)
- 42 Improved (6)
- 43 Most quick (9)
- 44 Skilled (5)
- 45 Cabbage salad (8)
- 50 Greek letter (2)
- 51 Whiptailed sea creature (8)
- 55 Highland musician (5)
- 58 Runniness (9)
- 59 Eye cover (6)
- 60 Unkempt (7)
- 61 Unwell (3)
- 63 Surprise attack (4)
- 64 Bring to mind (6)

DOWN

- 2 Travelling show (6)
- 3 Fleeting (5)
- 5 Conception (4)
- 6 Tresses trim (7)
- 7 Spice (6)
- 8 Scoffer (5)
- 9 Floating mass (7)
- 10 Foam (4)
- 11 Smells (6)
- 12 Avarice (5)
- 13 Interfered (7)
- 14 Taste (7)
- 18 Oval (10)
- 23 Deadly (5)
- 24 Most beloved (7)
- 26 Mimic (7)
- 27 Japanese warrior (7)
- 29 Trailblazer (7)
- 30 Gambling establishment (6)

ACROSS

- 31 Broad river mouth (5)
- 32 Halve (6)
- 34 Balanced (4)
- 36 Waste drain (5)
- 38 Simple song (5)
- 40 Biblical garden (4)
- 45 Insurance (5)
- 46 Durable (7)
- 47 Decelerate (4)
- 48 Crops up (6)
- 49 Month (5)
- 50 Introductory music (7)
- 52 Beyond belief (10)
- 53 Hungarian dish (7)
- 54 Spare the price of (6)
- 55 Egyptian construction (7)
- 56 Rider's straps (5)
- 57 Metal (4)
- 62 Slyly disparaging (5)
- 67 Criminal (7)
- 68 Served food portion (7)
- 70 Special messenger (7)
- 72 Trade ban (7)
- 73 Russian horse-drawn vehicle (6)
- 74 Greek sea god (6)
- 75 Dull and heavy (6)
- 76 Bonded servant (5)
- 78 Slender graceful girl (5)
- 80 Bombard (5)
- 82 Hair tangle (4)
- 83 Shock (4)



PREVIOUS SOLUTION

ACROSS: 1 Solving, 4 Slanderous, 9 Cavalry, 13 Itch, 14 Depart, 15 Summit, 16 Content, 19 Linguistic, 20 Ravenous, 21 Equal, 24 Credit, 25 Traced, 27 Warmonger, 32 Mistaken, 33 Stuffy, 34 Tension, 38 Gauntlet, 39 Ground, 40 Beam, 41 Quill, 42 Steed, 45 Fall on deaf ears, 52 Lamps, 55 Brain, 56 Smog, 57 Rested, 58 Trifling, 61 Twisted, 62 Scroll, 63 Collapse, 66 Endurable, 68 Ruling, 69 Averts, 73 Knave, 74 Withheld, 76 Mechanical, 81 Diploma, 82 Cinema, 83 Sailor, 84 Want, 85 Staying, 86 Licentious, 87 Diverse.

DOWN: 1 Still, 2 Licensee, 3 Grease, 4 Swami, 5 Asti, 6 Desired, 7 Remove, 8 Union, 10 Ahoy, 11 Antique, 12 Runway, 17 Humiliated, 18 Dummy, 22 Scenario, 23 Onset, 24 Changes, 26 Rake, 28 Affable, 29 Itself, 30 Tundra, 31 Dollop, 33 Sound, 35 Sauna, 36 Tune, 37 Fair, 43 Thrown, 44 Evils, 46 Army, 47 Logical, 48 Narrow, 49 Easel, 50 Fiercely, 51 Stream, 52 Lifesaving, 53 Main, 54 Signals, 59 Debut, 60 Flan, 64 Basic, 65 Armchair, 67 Novelty, 68 Radiant, 70 Enlist, 71 Delete, 72 Shroud, 75 Haiti, 77 Exits, 78 Lithe, 79 Omen, 80 Oslo.

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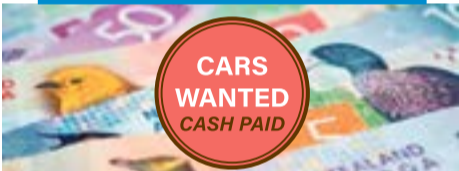
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Last month's winner of the lotto ticket was Gaylene Holt from Coromandel, who found Pete in the March 17th edition in the Christine & Co advert.

Go to page 2 for details on how to enter.



SPORTS

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First win for Whangamatā

SURFING

The Whangamatā Area School Girls Surfing Team and Gisborne Boys High School Surfing Team have both claimed the prestigious Cranch Cup at the 2026 New Zealand School Surfing Festival in March.

It is the first time the two teams have claimed victories at the event, with the final day of action played out in clean 1m waves under wet skies at Māori Bay, Muriwai.

Twenty-one school teams took part in the event this year, with just under 100 participants involved. The festival aims to grow surfing as a recognised sport within schools.

The Whangamatā team battled their opponents through three round robin heats and finished tied on points with Mount Maunganui College.

It took a countback of aggregate points across the three rounds to separate the two teams with Whangamatā edging out Mount Maunganui: 51.77 vs 45.33.

Whangamatā Area School needed to win the final round robin match up to force the tie break, with the team comprising of India Kennings, Lola Groube, Poppy Robinson, and Ariella Lansdowne.

"We're super excited and happy to take it out this year," team captain India Kennings said.

"We've been super close the past two years, so it feels really good to take this win, especially in my last year being able to captain this team - such an amazing

group of girls." Mount Maunganui College finished runner-up overall, ahead of the Auckland composite team in third, and Whangamatā Area School Team 2 finishing in fourth.

Gisborne Boys High School looked strong in the preliminary rounds as they took on their more favoured opponents including this year's favourites Mount Maunganui College, two-time defending champions, Whangamatā Area School and 2024 finalists Takapuna Grammar.

Gisborne Boys High finished with a 31.34 point heat total across their five surfers in the tag team format. They edged out runner-ups Takapuna Grammar on 29.53 points out of a possible 50.

Gisborne Boys High School was led by captain Ollie Tong, and included Harry McFarlane, Jaxon Pardoe, Archie Alder, and James Lalla.

"Yeah, it's amazing. We've come a long way up from Gizzy and it's just so cool to win. All the boys' development recently - it's a big team effort for us," Ollie said.

Takapuna Grammar finished second, storming back into contention through Jesse Frazerhurst (8.67), Finn Norris (7.33) and Sam Frazerhurst (6.47) but fell just short when the final hooter sounded.

Whangamatā Area School Boys (27.91) finished in third place ahead of Mount Maunganui College Boys (25.08).

The New Zealand School Surfing Festival is sanctioned by School Sport New Zealand and part of Summer Tournament Week held annually in March.



The champion Whangamatā Area School Team: India Kennings, left, Lola Groube, Poppy Robinson, and Ariella Lansdowne. Photo: PHOTOCPL



Paeroa Bowling Club held its singles club championship last month. After a very competitive competition our champions were found - the singles ladies champion is Sheryl Waterman and the men's singles champion is Paul Cornish. These two are well deserved champions and represent the very best of Paeroa Bowling Club. Congratulations to them both. - Supplied by Paeroa Bowls

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Aurora Harvey aims for the sky, left, while Lillith Taylor-Imrie is all suited up.



Photos: SUPPLIED

Wee-oo! Wee-oo!

By DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

A fun and exciting experience with “very loud sirens” took place in early March, when the Tirohia School community was visited by a group of local heroes. The Paeroa Volunteer Fire Brigade rolled up to the school in the big red truck to share a bit of education about the work they do, which also included letting students try out some of their equipment. Ivy-Rein Taylor, 7, told *The Profile* the best part was when she squirted the hose. “It was fun because one of the big kids squirted the teachers.” Decklin Murray, 6, along with Bella Knights, 12, enjoyed when they got to sit in the fire truck.

“We got to push the buttons for the sirens and lights.” Decklin said he also tried to lift a firefighters backpack but it was too heavy and he fell down. But Trinity Papuni, 9, believed the most important part was when the firefighters showed the students how to put on the suit, and how long it takes to get ready. “They help people get out of their house fast, and kids need to come out first,” Decklin said. Office Administrator Alana Abraham said the kids thought it was an awesome experience. “We think it was good for our tamariki to see the fire brigade in a positive light and learn that they help in many different ways, not just fires.”



Ivy-Rein Taylor is ready to go in the fire truck.



Chael Maru operates the fire hose.



Firefighter Stephen Taylor demonstrates.



Santana-Haze Ihaia learns about the machinery.

Bowentown playground upgrade swings into action

Work has started on a refresh of the Tui Park playground at Bowentown. Western Bay of Plenty District Council said the upgrade had been shaped by ideas shared by the local community, who wanted a mix of active play and natural elements. It will include big swings, baby swings, a mini flying fox-style glider, climbing frame and natural play features like logs, rocks and balancing equipment. Once completed, the playground will also be easier to access, with a boardwalk and ramp, plus a rock seating area for tamariki to gather and play. The upgrade is part of the council's on-going playground renewal programme,

with funding allocated from the Long Term Plan 2024-2034. “Playgrounds play a huge role in helping our tamariki build confidence, stay active, connect with others and explore the world around them. “This refresh will help ensure Tui Park continues to be a safe and welcoming place for the community,” Peter Watson, Council's Reserves and Facilities Manager, said. The work is being carried out by Tauranga-based contractor CGC Landscapes, and is expected to continue through April and May, weather permitting. **DETAILS: For more information, visit your place.westernbay.govt.nz/tui-park.**

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Archer's aim delivers gold medal

ARCHERY

By DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

Daniel Neufeld's dream is to one day represent New Zealand on the archery world stage.

It's a target that's drawn closer with his recent competition victory.

The archer, who is also the HOD of maths at Thames High School, competed at the North Island Archery Championships in Palmerston North on March 14-15.

That's not all, the athlete clinched the gold medal win in the masters class for ranking day and snapped up a silver medal for match-play day.

His first-place finish stunned him.

"I won't lie. It felt really good and I was a little surprised. I was coming off an injury and hadn't been able to train as hard as normal so it was a very satisfying result," he told *The Profile*.

Ranking day is where archers shoot one or two rounds of 72 arrows.

"These scores count towards your national ranking and arrange the pairings for the following match-play day," he said.

Match-play is when an archer competes in rounds of three arrows against an opponent.

"If you win a round, you get two points, and a tie gets one point. The first to six [points] wins and then you take on another winner."

While Daniel said he hoped for



Daniel Neufeld, left, prepares for the competition.

the gold on the match-play day, there were many good archers there and it was "easy for the mental challenge to overwhelm you".

In such intense head-to-head matches, he was happy he could "keep it together" well.

His journey into the world of archery started when he was a teenager. "I have had three phases. My father has always been a hunter in Canada and in my late teens, I did some bow hunting but quit when I started uni."

In his thirties, he lived in Japan and one day by chance, he met the head sensei of the local kyudo, a traditional Japanese archery club.

"The club was gorgeous and he was hilarious, so I started training in that for two years, gaining ikkyu level (like a Brown belt)," he said.

Daniel took a break from the sport until three years ago when he and his son signed up for a lesson package.

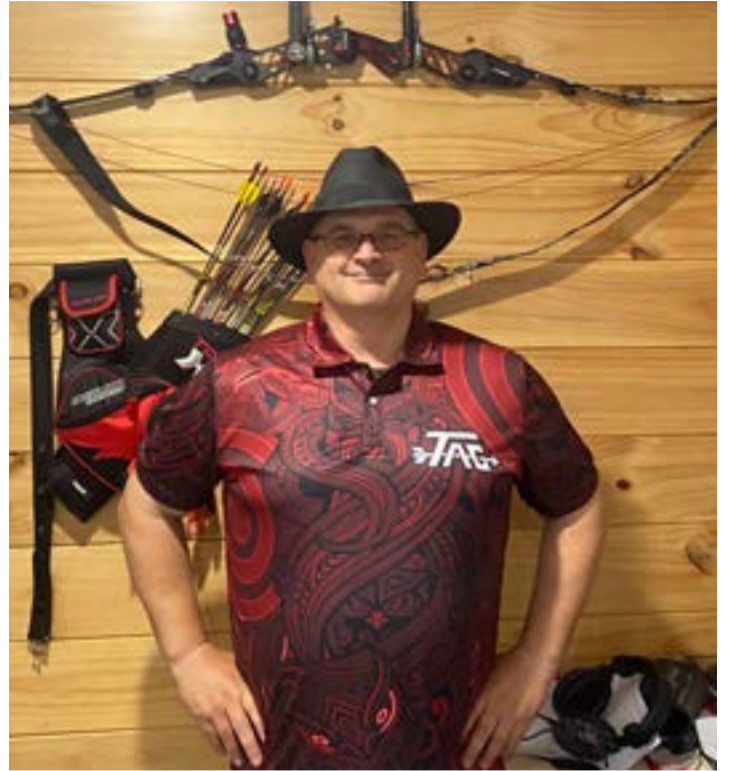
"I really liked it and the instructor became my coach. I have been training quite hard ever since."

When it comes to distractions, the biggest one was "always the inner voice", he said.

He trained at the Thames Clay Target Club so became "very immune" to sudden external noises, he said. "I am tremendously grateful to the Clay Shooting Club for their support."

Daniel used to be part of the Riverglade Club in Hamilton, but last year formed a competition group called the Thames Archery Group (TAG).

The next goal on the horizon for



Daniel was the Auckland District Archery Championship.

"I am working to build on my national ranking and [to] maintain number one in the masters division so I can apply for the national team when the next international opportunity arises."

The inspiration to do his best in archery came down to one person. "My son always inspires me. It is

every father's hope that their children are proud of them."

It was evident archery influenced Daniel's outlook on life.

"When you are aiming high, the path to one's goal is rarely straight or easy and no doubt full of ups and downs," he said. "But you have to take it all in stride and keep going, not forgetting to enjoy the journey as you go."



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