

PEOPLE of the YMCA



Annie Ren Owner of Robert Harris at the City YMCA

Annie set up Robert Harris over 11 years ago and hasn't looked back. From word go she felt the YMCA was a "friendly, warm environment that was easy to deal with". Her family is involved with the YMCA just as much as she is. "My husband Ted sponsors people to compete in the YMCA Golf tournament every year, my son goes to holiday programme and my four-year

old daughter goes to the ballet class in the City YMCA every Saturday morning. My son last week said "Mum I want to be a YMCA holiday programme leader one day". The YMCA is for everybody. Children, and elderly. Everyone can find something they like here."



Kimiya Preddy Alternative Education Student

Kimiya has been a student on the YMCA AE programme for two years. "Before the YMCA I used to bunk but now I come to course every day". Having only 20 students in the classroom with 3 teachers, Kimiya says she feels like the YMCA is a family. "You can be yourself around the students and tutors. This October the class is going to Nepal to help the YMCA of Nepal with

who have suffered from the Nepal earthquake. Josie, and Dave, told us we were going to help rebuild their buildings because of their earthquake. Going to Nepal? Us? We didn't believe them... even the tutors didn't. But we are going. It's crazy."



Jack Earl Gym Member

Jack has been a city gym member for over two years. "I really like it for the community atmosphere. It's hard to find a gym which is so down to earth and everyone knows everyone. It's friendly and easy-going." Jack is a landscape architect and works down the road from the Y. "I run here as a warm up, and when I come at night it's nice to be able to use the

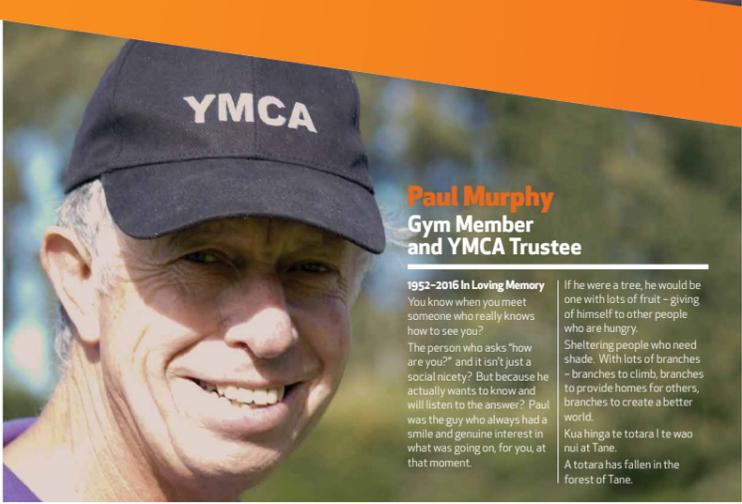
courts, or get a beer after I've finished, all in the same building". YMCA long-time staff member of 25 years John always has a story to tell: "John was telling me the other day how the band Imagine Dragons came into the gym and loved the music we were playing, and sometimes the odd All Black comes in."



Dorothy Baird & Noel Parker Life Fit Participants

Dorothy and Noel are partners who have both been involved with the YMCA gym for over 20 years. "I started Life Fit at 60. I had always been a jogger but I've always known the value of exercise so I decided to join the gym". Noel now enjoys Life Fit because of the diversity. "You do cardio, weights, cycling, rowing on the machines... the YMCA is always keeping up with what people want and need". Dorothy enjoys the social side of Life Fit: "On Fridays we normally get a cup of coffee with everyone, the social side is an important aspect". Three

started at Kumara Beach in Hokitika and went all the way to Christchurch City. Some cycled, some jogged and some walked. It was a lovely weekend. We are still talking about that". To enjoy life you have to be fit and healthy, Noel and Dorothy both believe. "We all have a bit of fun with each other, life's to enjoy you only have one shot at it."



Paul Murphy Gym Member and YMCA Trustee

1952-2016 In Loving Memory
You know when you meet someone who really knows how to see you?

The person who asks "How are you?" and it isn't just a social nicety? But because he actually wants to know and will listen to the answer? Paul was the guy who always had a smile and genuine interest in what was going on, for you, at that moment.

If he were a tree, he would be one with lots of fruit - giving of himself to other people who are hungry. Sheltering people who need shade. With lots of branches - branches to climb, branches to provide homes for others, branches to create a better world. Kua hinga te totara I te wao nui at Tane. A totara has fallen in the forest of Tane.



Mary Rocha Owner of the Travel Desk

Mary set up NZEGA at the Y two years ago. "From the first day I loved the environment, the vibe, people were in the gym, Robert Harris, SPECTRUM, vibrant in so many aspects. We organize day trips in Christchurch and if they are staying longer in the South Island we plan their whole trip. We had some American students who went skiing at Mt Hutt and sent me a photo with them doing

with their hands". Mary believes you have to enjoy your work life just as much as your personal life. "You go to work 8-9 hours and spend 2-3 hours at home so you have to be in a good work environment, it's important to have a feeling of family and belonging at work. Even though we are a separate business we are a part of the YMCA family."



Luke Murphy Bishopdale YMCA & Thursday Club Volunteer

Luke has been working at the Bishopdale YMCA for the past four years, for one full day every week. "I work in the gym, or I do gardening, small jobs for people around the place. At the end it feels like you have done something good. I see the same people so I get to know them and they get to know me." Luke also believes the Thursday Club is a great thing the Y offers.

with special needs. "We do activities such as arts and crafts, trips to Willowbank and ten pin bowling. Last year we went to the Lone Star. We like feeding the ducks in the park and watching the planes at the airport. We are going to Wainui for another camp at the end of the year too. We look forward to that!"



Stephane Brucher Climber and Coach

Stephane has been a member since he arrived from Canada over four years ago. "I discovered the City YMCA wall, and I fell in love with climbing." Stephane is now a prolific and frequent feature at the Adventure Centre, for his own climbing but also helping out with route setting. "I climb 3-4 times a week in winter, and train

with Shania Gibson, who is going to the World Youth Championships with the New Zealand team. At the Y they change the rock holds every six months, which is very important to climbers, making sure there is always a new challenge."



Diana Yang & Yaya Liu Pre-school Student

Diana Wang has had her daughter Yaya enrolled since she moved to New Zealand from China over a year ago. "I know my daughter is happy here, she talks about her friends, and sings the songs from preschool when she washes her hands." Last year before Christmas the children got to ride ponies to celebrate the end of the

pony again? Yaya asks me that a lot! The teachers not only helped Yaya's transition, "the teachers give me advice, they have helped me with my driver's license, let me borrow books. I feel very comfortable, they look after the children and me."



Jackie Richardson Head Receptionist

Jackie has been our City YMCA receptionist for 29 years. Even after all that time Jackie says she has never been bored. "The YMCA is always evolving. I couldn't stay in a job that was the same routine every day. People are always coming and going, but

they never forget their YMCA experiences... after the earthquakes people from all over the world contacted the staff seeing if we were okay. Like the Eagles song Hotel California, you can check-out anytime you like, but you can never leave."



Ken Yep Fitness Instructor

Ken has been a fitness instructor at the Bishopdale gym for over two years. Ken decided the gym was for him: "It's a community gym, super nice, not too serious, and the

staff are awesome. "One time I had to dress in an 80s get up in the gym for the whole day. I don't see it as a job. I respect them and they respect me."



Jordan Figota Youth Programme Volunteer

Jordan has been involved with the YMCA for five years. "If my friend hadn't introduced me to the Y I would never discovered I had a passion for teaching. I was a Dolphin Camper at the Wainui Camp where we did rafting, kayaking, archery... it was a pretty cool time... plus I won the 'Best All Round Camper'

award" After that Jordan became an Orca then a leader for the Wainui Camp. Now he is a holiday programme supervisor. While studying Jordan is also working part-time helping to co-ordinate the YMCAs 'Dancing Like the Stars', a free nine week dance programme for decile 1 & 2

first year of primary school teacher training - the YMCA helped me find my passion and let it develop. I've had lots of opportunities and it feels like I belong."



Ezequiel (Zee) Amado Outdoor Instructor at Wainui Park

Zee has been a volunteer at Wainui Park for nine months. "I studied at the YMCA University in Uruguay to be a teacher. I always wanted to come to New Zealand." Zee works with a team of international and Kiwi staff. "It's been a good season, sharing experiences with people from all over the world - England, Canada, Germany... I have learned to live with other people with different cultures in

Zee is a fan of Wainui's impressive Giant Swing. "It gives the kids a chance to conquer their fear, learn how to communicate with one another, and work as a team." Over the Christmas break Zee explored the rest of New Zealand. "I love New Zealand, it's beautiful. I've been all around the country and Wainui is the most beautiful place I've been."



TJ Rupapere Youth Guarantee Education Student

TJ has been with our education program for only four weeks. "I was over the public school system, it wasn't doing me any good. I wasn't getting anywhere. At the Y, I'm getting support from the tutor as well as the students. The tutors don't stop until you get it right." Recently the class went to Ashburton

"There was basketball, frisbee, and hungry hippos balls... the class has a different way of doing things so you get a lot more out of it this year. I feel I can achieve a lot, all the Y staff are so kind... I highly recommend it to other people who can't deal with school."