



JULIA CONNOR

Julia never enjoyed her time at high school. She felt it wasn't the best place for her, at 17 she left school and home in Invercargill to move to Dunedin. She gave hospitality a go before moving into a career in travel and tourism. Julia enjoyed the fact that a tourism career allowed her to work, travel and explore different cultures. She has lived and worked in Australia and the UK. Julia spent 6 years working at Flight Centre where she worked her way up from a Retail Consultant to a management position. She even got to manage the Buckingham Palace Royal travel account! She has also worked in HR which she found incredibly boring and she didn't get a University Degree until she was 33 years old. Julia is a mum of two with a diverse career background. She understands the challenges of not knowing what you want to do as soon as you finish high school and would be great to talk if you are interested in the tourism/travel industry or if like Julia you're also unsure about what to do post high school.

One thing you wished you had known when you left high school? Everything happens for a reason and that everything will work out in the end. If someone had told me this at 17, it would have stopped me from stressing and worrying during high school about my career and where I was going to go.



STEPHEN SCHROEDER

Stephen is married with three children aged 5, 10 and 13 and he is currently both a full-time Dad and chief in charge of cleaning up a 5 hectare orchard that has been left untended for 20+ years. He is lucky to have a digger and a tractor though which makes up for having to do school lunches every day. He has had a varied 'working' life which started when he was "asked to leave" Shirley Boys High School and ended up getting an apprenticeship as a timber machinist at age 15. He later went on to be self-employed for about 5 years doing a range of small businesses including window cleaning, commercial carpet cleaning, quail farming, women's swimsuit design, designing and making bespoke educational furniture and making concrete pavers. He then was employed as the Farm Manager at Akaroa Salmon which he did for another 15 years before falling in love with a lovely girl at the YMCA camp in Wainui!!! That of course led on to working for the Wainui Park as the Property Manager and as they say, the rest is history.

One thing you wished you had known when you left high school? How to employ people. One person can only do the work of one person, and all my business ideas got a bit stuck when I had to employ staff. How to go about it and how to manage people.



DIANNA JENKINSON

Di finished high school and went straight into a 3 year Diploma of Teaching. At the end of her second year she got offered a job so made the decision to take a year off study to earn some money and gain some practical experience. After she completed her 3rd year, she worked in a corporate childcare environment as a Team Leader. Di's journey through Early Childhood work saw her move from a Team Leader role into management pretty quickly. She then worked as the ECE Manager for the YMCA and set up the preschool at Bishopdale. In 2016 she purchased two preschools that were in financial difficulty and has invested huge amounts of time, energy and experience, and over the past 9 months has completely turned these both into thriving centres. She has a wealth of knowledge about the Early Childhood Education Sector and sits as one of five Executive Board members within the Early Childhood Council, a National body that supports Early Childhood Centres throughout New Zealand. So if any of these things interest you, then she is the person to talk to.

The biggest hurdle you have overcome to get to where you are now? I was challenged to step outside of my comfort zone, and having the belief in myself to succeed over the past 12 months.



SCOTT HARRIS

Scott has always had a love for science and figuring out how things work. At school he wasn't too focused on the academic aspect, instead his love of sport was his main focus. His parents didn't think he would make it to University but his passion for science and sport led him to start studying a Bachelor of Physical Education at the University of Otago, only after a year realising that this was not for him. By his second year of studies Scott began heading towards a Bachelor of Science which fulfilled his passions of figuring out how things work and graduated with a double degree after five years of study. He currently works at the Christchurch Public Hospital firstly starting off as a Cardiac Physiologist which he didn't love so changed into the role he is in now as a Cardiac Sonographer. Scott understands the challenges of not knowing exactly which path you want to go down after you finish high school but believes that if you follow your passions you will find something that suits you. If you are interested in sciences, the medical profession or community health then Scott could be the speaker for you.

When you were a child what did you want to become as an adult? Steve Irwin as he loves animals, bugs and the outdoors.



KOTTE AGUILAR

Kotte's career goal is to make yoga accessible (not just financially but also physically) for everybody. Kotte owns her own business and has overcome the challenge of not having any previous business knowledge or a business degree. In her time as a yoga teacher she has focused her work in youth, working with organizations such as Te Puna Wai, White Elephant, Youth Town and others, such as Kilmarnock Enterprises. Kotte is passionate about ensuring her work gives back to the community at all times, working in partnership with local business, local young artists and people who have a similar mind set. Kotte's biggest achievement was receiving the Community Excellence Award for the Exercise Industry in 2016, which is a first for a Yoga Teacher. Kotte believes that being authentic and being true to yourself is key to your success. If you are interested in starting your own business/social enterprise or if you are passionate about community health and wellbeing, Kotte would be a great speaker to talk to.

The biggest hurdle you have overcome to get to where you are now? Feeling like I was judged and what I was doing was wrong, and that being different was a bad thing. People have put me down and made me feel like I wouldn't make it this far.



CAMERON RUSSELL

Since high school Cam has always been passionate about giving back to the community and supporting young people. He was deputy head boy at Shirley Boys High School and was also involved in various youth councils, community groups and was even part of a government run advisory panel where his role was to advocate on behalf of young people. Cam has recently completed his Bachelor of Teaching and Learning, his journey at University also involved a partial year of Arts papers before he settled on Bachelor of Teaching and Learning. After completing his degree he started his current job as a year 5 & 6 teacher at Thornington Primary School. Cam is an outgoing chatty guy who wants to see young people succeed and find what they are passionate about. If you are interested in teaching, community development or governance then Cam would be the speaker for you.

One thing you wished you had known when you left high school? You don't have to rush into anything - that GAP years and travelling can be a great experience. You have plenty of time to make decisions about your future career path.



REBECCA DEMPSEY

From a young age Rebecca wanted a career in helping people in some way, initially she thought she would follow in her dad's footsteps as a doctor but after realising that she fainted when she saw blood, she decided that wasn't for her. Her mum's lifestyle as a lawyer appealed to Rebecca so from early in her high school years she set her mind on becoming a lawyer, and started studying at Otago University when she left school. She finished after 4.5 years of study with a Bachelor of Laws with Honours. During her first year of law she found herself questioning whether this was the right career, and in her last year she decided to try something slightly different and went on a study exchange to Canada. She currently works at Simpson Grierson as a Commercial Property Lawyer. Rebecca has a passion for helping others and if you have any questions about law as a career or university exchanges then she is the person to talk to.

One thing you wished you had known when you left high school? I left school narrow minded and had my heart set on being a lawyer, luckily it has worked out for me and it is something that I love. I do wish that I knew about other options that were out there and received information on not just what to study but the different pathways that you can take.



HARLEY HAMILTON

Harley has always been a fan of the question why. His inquisitive nature and constant question asking often saw him getting in trouble at school but was also what lead him to study a Bachelor of Arts in Politics and History. Harley has always jumped at the opportunity to travel and it has taken him to Singapore on a student exchange for a year. He also taught English in Chiang Mai, while in Chiang Mai he discovered his passion for working with children and young people. He currently works for World Vision which combines his passion for travel and working with young people. He is also currently completing his master's thesis on Children's Empowerment and will travel to Bangladesh at the end of this year as part of his research. Harley's favourite part of his job is when he is able to see young people feeling empowered through making positive change in their communities. If you are interested in travel, politics, global not for profit organisations or you have lots of "why" questions, then he is the speaker to talk to.

One thing you wished you had known when you left high school? There are no rules in terms of how you live your life. You often think that there is a path that you are meant to follow. Do your thing and you'll have an awesome life. Do what you are passionate about and follow your dreams.



NATE CULLEY

Nate from a young age knew that he wanted a career in the Health & Fitness industry. He spent a huge amount of his time at school counting down the days until he was finished, and when he did he started his Bachelor of Sport Coaching endorsed in Strength & Conditioning. Nate told us that he never entirely clicked with study but he always persevered and his perseverance is a skill that has been key to him achieving in the highly competitive world of the Health & Fitness industry. After completing his degree, Nate was offered a management job in a gym, however before the end of his 90 day trial Nate was let go from this management role. After that he was able to gain a new PT role at f45 Christchurch where he started as a casual trainer and has quickly moved up the ranks and is now the Assistant Manager and Head Trainer. Although most of Nate's career has been in personal training, he has also worked construction and demolition jobs and worked in the not for profit sector with an organisation that worked primarily with low decile schools. If you have questions about personal training as a career then Nate will be the person to talk to.

When you were a child what did you want to become as an adult? I wanted to be a professional athlete, and to be honest I still have that dream!



JAMIE POTTINGER

Jamie has lived in Christchurch for majority of his life and attended Christchurch Boys High School. After finishing high school he was unsure of what to do from there when his parents encouraged him to take a few years off and to travel the world. During Jamie's time overseas he coached a sports team, did a 30 day Contiki tour through Europe, went to Gallipoli, visited some concentration camps and ran in the London Marathon. Travelling around the world made Jamie realise what an amazing place NZ is to live in and he had a clearer direction of what he wanted to do. Jamie began studying at the University of Otago towards a Bachelor of Geology and Economics. His interest in earthworks has brought him to the role he is in now as Department Manager and Road Marking Manager at Fulton Hogan. An aspect Jamie really enjoys and finds rewarding about his job is helping his staff to enjoy their time at work and helping them to develop. If you are interested in taking a GAP year, engineering, earthworks or generally want to talk to someone about different options then Jamie is the speaker for you.

One thing you wished you had known when you left high school? Whether you travel and take a GAP year, or try a few courses out you don't have to rush into it.