

PEOPLE of the YMCA



Rafaela Ruppenthal, 26 House Keeper, City Y

Rafaela was born in Brazil and has been living in NZ for the past five years. Rafa has been working at the Y for the last two years as a house keeper at the City Y Accommodation, and occasionally works in the Papa Hou bar. The hostels high season has just finished, "our peak season is from

December to March, so it's busy all the time". Rafa enjoys how fast paced the job is but also the flexibility, "I like the people and how flexible it is. If I need a day off I can rework my schedule to make everything fit."



Zuri George, 25 Maintenance & Facilities, Adventure Centre

Zuri first volunteered and then became a permanent staff member in 2013, at the YMCA Adventure Centre. Zuri has taken on a new role there this year as the Maintenance and Facility Co-ordinator. The Adventure Centre is coming into its busy season, winter. "I usually work on a Monday night, and it's buzzing". Through the Adventure Centre and the Flying Geckos, we

offer scholarships to help youth competing in climbing competitions, "the Centre is unique as it's the only climbing facility in Christchurch. New Zealand is only starting to see how big climbing is in the rest of the world." Zuri has also just purchased his first home, "The Y helped with that, and has let me travel as well. When I'm not at the Adventure Centre, I'm on an adventure."



Rukupo Tuawhare, 16 Street Prints Otautahi Apprentice

Rukupo was selected as one of the Street Prints Otautahi apprentices last year, "I found out about becoming involved with the street art festival after my dad told me to apply for it". Rukupo worked over a week with fellow artist DSIDE from Wellington. "My favourite moment from the street art festival was working with DSIDE on his creation near

Cathedral Square. I also got to meet and work with other talented artists during the festival." Along with the other apprentices, Rukupo created an artwork on canvas, that was exhibited and sold at the end of the festival. Rukupo hopes to produce and sell more artwork after graduating from Shirley Boys High School, "The Y has taught me to take all opportunities."



Sasha Seatter, 22 Reception Manager, City Y

Sasha has been working as the Reception Manager at the City Y for the past six months and manages a team of 10 reception staff. "It's fast paced. Working on reception you get to meet people from all walks of life." Sasha says working as the reception manager gives her the ability to have a work life balance, "when I'm not at work, I'm surfing, figure

skating, or volunteering for St John." Sasha hopes to get the opportunity to move around the Y in the future and work for other departments. "The Y covers all aspects of the community which means there is a chance to move around and utilise all my skills. I like the values of the Y, I like to have a positive impact on people's lives - as cheesy as it may sound."

Jesse Gourley, 18 YG Education Student

Jesse is enrolled in the Youth Guarantee programme through the YMCA Education Centre, and has spent the last two years studying and gaining NCEA credits there. Jesse says he learns better at the Y, "the way everything is set out and structured for everyone, it bends to fit you". The Youth Guarantee programme has two classes consisting of 15 students in each class.

"The staff are good but they have their moments, like everyone else, and we have a good bunch of people in class too - so everyone gets along." Jesse wants to gain his NCEA level 2 this year, "I want to get a job in the retail sector - I've got goals I want to achieve, so I have to complete my NCEA first."



Conna Thackwell, 25 Volunteer, Supervisor, Y Camp

Conna has been involved with the Y for the last 9 years, "Mum made me volunteer as a leader for the Y because I wanted to be a teacher and said I needed the experience". Since that time Conna has gone on to be a holiday programme supervisor, Y camp director, Clip 'n Climb instructor, Thursday Club volunteer, as well as being involved in the Spectrum street art festival - all while training to become a qualified

primary school teacher. Conna was in Auckland last year working as a primary school teacher, and this year has been helping out with admin in YDS, until she takes up a full time teaching role in Christchurch. "The Y is a family to me, the people I have met and the opportunities I have been given have had such a positive impact on my life. I want to continue to be part of the Y and do the same for future Y leaders."



Minami Inoue, 27 Scott Harris, 27 YDS Manager & YDS Volunteer

Minami and Scott have been together since they met while studying at Otago University,

"It's great to work for an organisation you can involve your family with", says

Jay-Cee and Luhann, 4 de Beer ECE Preschool Family

Luhann has been attending the preschool for two years after his family moved to New Zealand from South Africa. He loves the activities at the preschool that allow him to play outside, build things, drive things, make things. He likes the construction toys the best! Jay-Cee said they chose the YMCA Pre-School because of the family values: "We had come all the way from South Africa. Luhann needed to feel safe and secure and the other

preschools seemed big and impersonal. He has thrived here because of the great relationships the teachers have with the children." Jay-Cee said that as English was Luhann's second language it is amazing how much his English has improved in a short time. "He is teaching me new words every day!"



and both became involved at the Y when Minami started there as the OSCAR Co-ordinator 3 years ago. Since then Scott has been Minami's support person - volunteering with Thursday Club, and being a Ski Camp supervisor two years in a row, and Minami moved into the YDS Manager position.

Minami. They are off on their extended OE in June. Minami has enjoyed her role as YDS Manager, but is excited that a new person will move into her role who will bring a new, fresh perspective to YDS. "Working at the Y has made me realise what I am really passionate about" she says.



Lili Haydon, 23 Social Media Team Leader

Lili has worked at the Y for over two years, "I love working for the Y because every day is different." Lili runs all of the social media pages across the various YMCA departments, and also fills in for reception at the City Y on a casual basis. "There are so many parts to the Y,

I interact with everyone and get to be involved with all the awesome things we do." Lili is also studying Political Science and Media Communications at Canterbury University, "being able to have a flexible work schedule is key for me, the Y allows flexibility for everyone's needs."



Max, 7 & Rose Connor, 5 Holiday Programme Participants

Max and Rose both go to Cotswold School, and moved up from Dunedin last year when their mum Julia took up the role of YMCA Accommodation Manager. "I like everything about Christchurch but it's not warmer here", says Rose. Max and Rose both attend holiday programmes and Rose's favourite activity is Clip 'n Climb, "it's fun to go climbing". Max says he wants to become

a leader in the future. They both also volunteer with Thursday Club with their mum, where they go to the airport and watch the planes take off, bake, or go to bowling. Max and Rose have also camped in Wainui last summer with their family, "we got to swim and go fishing."



Emily and Kate Fullen, 21 Gym Instructors

Emily and Kate are identical twins and have been working at the Y for a year and a half. "Everyone mixes us up - the gym members and the staff". In 2016, Emily and Kate attended Ara and became qualified personal trainers. Emily is currently completing her marketing and business diploma at Ara, "working at the Y has given me the opportunity to work and study at the same time." Emily and Kate work at both the Bishopdale and City gyms,

and have their own clients "working on the floor we get to watch people progress, and see them reach their goals, that's our favourite part of the job". When Kate and Emily aren't working, they are active themselves. "We both play hockey, so that keeps us busy as well." They are also travelling to Europe in June, "we don't just work together- we do everything together."



Tom Fastier, 17 Holiday Programme Volunteer

In Memoriam 2001-2018

Tom attended Cashmere High School and has been a regular and much loved volunteer at the YMCA for many years - he is a young man who has role modeled the purpose and essence of what we do as an organisation, which is to care for others so that we have a kind world to live in. Tom will be remembered by YMCA staff, youth leaders, and children who have known him here at the Y for his mellow, laid back persona, his dry wit, his wisdom beyond his years when it comes to understanding that the

world is complex and that everyone has a role to play in looking after others. Tom will be remembered for his generosity, and will live on at the YMCA through how he has impacted on the lives of others. So Tom, we come together as your mates and in the words of your favourite band Car Seat Headrest: "It should be called anti-depression, as a friend of mine suggested... Because it's not the sadness that hurts you, it's the brains reaction against it." Rest in peace.



Mahalia Pilgrim, 20 YDS Admin & Change Agent

Mahalia started working as a volunteer on holiday programmes, "I remember I started on my 16th birthday, and volunteered for two years straight". From there Mahalia became an assistant supervisor, an OSCAR administrator, and this year became a Change Agent for the Y. "I was in Portugal last year and am going to Thailand in July. I get to facilitate

YMCA CEO's from all over the world. It's a two year programme, so I graduate this year as well." Mahalia is currently studying Psychology and Human Services at Canterbury University, "I want to keep working for the Y part-time, it's my second home. I want to focus on doing more youth events and youth empowerment within the Y."



Gemma Murphy, 27 Centre Manager, Arthur's Pass

Gemma took on a role as a volunteer outdoor instructor at YMCA Wainui Park camp six years ago, "it was amazing seeing the dolphins two metres away when I was kayaking in Tikao Bay, once we saw an orca!" Gemma went on to work in Australia as an outdoor instructor but came back to NZ with her partner James to take on the role as the Arthur's Pass Outdoor Education Centre Manager

last November. "I handle the group bookings, plan the programmes and instruct the groups that stay here. I also do (most) of the maintenance, the cleaning and now manage the visitor bookings. I love the community within the staff at the Y. I am always made to feel welcome when I come into town. I think the Y really do "invest" in our future by looking at how they can help us progress and upskill!"

James Sadler, 27 Chief Instructor, Wainui Park

James started working as a volunteer outdoor instructor at Wainui Park. "There are so many people I enjoy working with, in my role I have the pleasure of teaching new staff how to be outdoor instructors, and to help them develop their skills and self-confidence". James also worked as a tutor with the YMCA Alternative Education programme for 6 months, before heading overseas with

his partner Gemma. James started back at Wainui at the beginning of this year as the Chief Instructor. "My main role is the facilitation of staff training in all of the outdoor activities we run, including sign off and providing developmental feedback." James and Gemma met at Wainui Park over 6 years ago, "Gemma thinks it wasn't romantic but I think it was a sneaky romance."

