

Okato Playcentre



What a great start we've had to our first term back at Playcentre. We've been enjoying some outside play, painting and of course using our clay wheel.

Checking out our garden, our sunflowers have grown to an enormous size with faces on them as big as dinner plates. Our corn will be ready for harvesting soon, and we've already eaten some of our cucumbers for morning tea. Our tadpoles have turned into frogs!

The theme for the next two terms is wings & water so we will be having some cool activities based around this theme. We have planned outings to Opunake Beach, a trip on Chaddy's

Charters and a visit to the airport to check out the aeroplanes. Hopefully we also get to see the helicopters up close.

We would love to see some new faces at Playcentre so feel free to come and see us. For further information contact Rachel on 752 4463.

By Marlene Goodreds

Pictured above: Austin Pollard and his mum measuring the sunflowers.

a peek inside

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editorial FROM THE TOM ZONE

On a recent weekend, my husband and I were playing tennis at Omata School's new multi-sport court. It was a gorgeously hot afternoon and I was enchanted with the influx of other people who were also using the facilities.

Two people were playing basketball, a mum, her son and two dogs were trying to fly a kite, teenagers were skateboarding on the skate-park and a handful of families were using the community pool. It was such a healthy, happy and enjoyable place to be for everyone concerned. Then I thought about the article Kerry Lilley wrote last month on the eyesores in Okato. I felt sad that such a valuable asset like Okato Primary School is just a derelict heap of dry bones.

The Ministry truly did suck the life out of the school and possibly a part of the community. What a cruel reminder to have to look at it everyday – "Fight on," I say!

Kim

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Okato Fire Brigade – Fire Officer Profile

BRUCE BARRON, Station Officer

When did you join the brigade? 24th August 1981

Why did you choose to join the service? I decided I would like to do something for the community, and thought fire brigade would be an ideal way of putting something back into the district. I worked my way up to Deputy Chief, but with work commitments I felt I wasn't doing this position justice so asked to step back down to Station Officer.

What qualities do you think a person needs to bring to the service? One essential quality of being a suitable member is you must have a good sense of humour, and you must definitely be a team player.

What have been the highlights for you? My highlights have been when I was made a Life Member on the night of the 50th jubilee of the brigade about five years ago, and when I received my Gold Star for 25 years of service in 2006.

How do you feel when the siren/pager goes off? Even after all these years, when the pager/siren goes off the adrenalin kicks in.

What has been your most embarrassing moment? When made a Life Member I was put on the spot to make a speech without any prior warning.

Extra comment.

Okato is lucky to have a good strong team with Barry Harvey doing a fine job as Chief, Brian as Deputy, and some keen young members to keep us oldies on our toes. Having a lady member, Milly, also helps to keep the balance. I am pleased my two sons have joined. Logan is Station Officer and Jared joined after his extensive OE.

By Milly Carr

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Okato Lions

Hi folks

Man it only seems like a few days ago I was writing my piece for the February TOM – Time sure does fly! We have had some good rain since I wrote last, which has kept our grass growing in a reasonable state.

Our president John King was away for our last tea night. The rest of us enjoyed a good meal with a drink or two and plenty of good fellowship. One new member came along and, of course, it is great to have John Hislop back with us. John is a life member.

We are looking forward to 1st March when quite a few of us will travel to the McPhail & Gadsby show. For our March meeting, our speaker will be Nic Fenner who will speak on his experiences when he was in the Royal Navy, especially the time he spent with the submarines.

Until next month

Lion - Merv Hooker 752 4086

Open Day Manna Healing Centre


Manna Healing Centre will be holding its annual open day on Sunday 15 March at 2pm.

The trustees and the staff extend a warm invitation to you all to come along and see what Manna is all about. The centre will be open for people to inspect the guest rooms and all of our facilities. Afternoon tea will follow.


Manna takes in guests that need time out for a few days in quiet and peaceful surroundings. Our staff take excellent care of our guests and provide tasty meals. Our grounds are looking very beautiful.

For further information please contact either Russell Martin on 753 3467 or Merv Hooker on 752 4066.

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Okato Pony Club

Over the weekend of the 14 and 15 February, we had five fantastic local girls, Darelle Martin, Ella Beaumont, Jessica Gibson, Anna Lacey and Ruby Tinson representing Okato Pony Club in a team called 'Okato Grasshoppers' at the New Zealand Pony Club Zone 3 Mounted Games in Hawera.

The girls competed in nine different games against 19 other teams from the Central District region which encompasses the Wellington, Hutt Valley, Wairarapa, Heretaunga and Taranaki areas.

They were one of the youngest teams at the games performing well over the weekend and making it through to the finals on the Sunday afternoon. The 'Grasshoppers' took home a prize for the best skit of the evening. It was a great effort girls', well done.

Amara Gibson



Okato Swim Club

Okato Swimming Club has just had its first ever member to qualify and swim in a New Zealand Championship. Jenna Barrett (aged 10) represented the Okato Swimming Club at the New Zealand Junior Championships in Wellington on 21 February 2009. At these Nationals Jenna took 8 seconds off her personal best in "100 Backstroke", and was ranked the 19th ten year old in New Zealand. Outstanding!

To qualify for this championship Jenna had to swim under a certain time for each stroke event at the U12 Taranaki Champs, which was held the last weekend of January. At this event, Jenna won 4 Gold Medals, 2 Silver medals and 1 Bronze medal.

Anna Crowley (aged 8) also competed for the Okato Swimming Club at the U12 Taranaki Champs. She took 10 seconds off her personal best in "50 Freestyle", 8 seconds off her personal best in "50 Backstroke" and 7 seconds off her personal best in "50 Butterfly", which is an enormous effort. Well done, Anna!

There are three regions in which these Champs are held - Auckland for the Northern swimmers, Wellington for the Central swimmers and Invercargill for the South Island swimmers. All swimmers compete on the same day to determine the 1st, 2nd and 3rd placings throughout New Zealand.

The Okato Swimmers are competing more and more throughout the region and are really stamping their mark on Taranaki swimming. At the recent Inglewood Carnival, Okato swimmers Anna Crowley, Anna and Camden Lacey, Renee Parker, Brandi Dakin, and Mitchell and Taila Hurley all won ribbons and came home with personal best times for the events they swam in. Well done to you all, and keep up the great work!

By Fiona Lacey




Jenna Barrett.

Anna Crowley.





At the Swim Carnival, Inglewood

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Okato, Wired to the World

In the mid-1870's, Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. Initially each telephone had lines going to many other telephones. Apart from this necessitating a lot of wires, there were practical limitations to how many phones you could connect to each other. Before long, however, a system of central switching was developed. Then each telephone connected to a central hub (the telephone exchange) from which an operator would connect calls between subscribers.

It worked like this: By lifting his or her telephone receiver, a subscriber would alert an operator that he or she wished to make a call. The operator would answer and ascertain to whom the subscriber wished to speak. If the requested connection was within the local exchange area, the operator would transfer the plug on her switchboard that was wired to the caller's phone to the socket of the person who was to receive the call. When the caller's receiver was hung up, the operator would remove the plug from the called party's socket, returning the line to standby. If the caller wished to make a call to a subscriber on an adjacent exchange, however, the operator had to call another operator there and ask him or her to make the connection. Calls further afield would become even more complicated. The call would then have to be set up via a chain of operators, each one calling the next. Although the system was complicated and labour intensive, it must have seemed magical at the time it was introduced!

Telegraph lines first become available to the Okato community in 1872 but it wasn't until 1888 that a telephone office was established here. Before 1920 only a dozen lines were connected to the Okato exchange. After World War II the demand grew, and in 1955 the exchange became manned full time. By 1965, with nearly 500 subscribers, there was a telephone in almost every home.

Telephone exchanges were traditionally attached to post offices and were run by the postmasters of the time. My research has revealed a few gaps in the written history of Okato. However, available information suggests that the first telephone exchange was opened in 1888 in Okato's first store, and was managed by its second owner, Mr H.S. Syme. Prominent businessman J.S. Fox bought the store the following year and took over the role of postmaster. He built a new general store, incorporating a new post office, in 1906. Then, in 1910, the first permanent post office was built at the front of the colonial villa at 33 Carthew Street. It operated until 1955, when a new exchange, incorporated in a new, modern post office, was built on the main street. Lorraine Whittle started working on the manual telephone exchange early in 1971 and was supposed to work there for two years, until the automatic exchange that was being built in another part of the building was due to become operational. As it turned out, she worked there for the next 4 years.

Read about her experiences in the next issue of TOM.

Story by Kerry Lilley



Okato Post Office, 1910-1955.

Photos from
"Okato,
Tataraimaka,
Puniho
Districts: Their
Stories Told,"
compiled by
Irene Waswo.



Fox's store and Post Office, 1906.



The opening of the new Post Office, 8th November 1955.

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COASTAL TARANAKI SCHOOL

Coastal Students at TOPEC

Every year Coastal Taranaki School sends its senior students for a leadership course at Topec. William Lower from year 12 was one of the students who went this year.

One of the hardest challenges he faced at camp was to make a sail boat out of kayaks, string and wood. For this challenge he had Rebecca Gibson, Danni Newsome, Simon Fraser, Kara Brown, Mere Mason, Nathan Moffitt, Michael Moyle, Raven Pearce and Preston Hartley on his team.

Mr Dickie and Mr Ralph (both ex Coastal Taranaki teachers) were their instructors. The purpose of the time at TOPEC was for a leaders' challenge to decide who was going to be head boy and girl.

William felt that TOPEC was "great fun but the weather wasn't very nice, especially the night we stayed in the bush" (Thursday night).

Phillipa Grayling, Year 7

Meisha Davies – A Model Student!

Meisha Davies, a year 12 student at Coastal Taranaki School, auditioned for the New Zealand Next Top Model. Clare and I interviewed her about her experience and asked her some questions about her year ahead.

What did you have to do when you auditioned? I had to go into the registration room and get measured to see if I was over 170cms. Then in groups of four we went into a little room to wait for our name to be called out. When I got called out a guy led me into another little room where the judges were. I got asked a few questions then I went back out. A few minutes later a guy came and gave me a piece of paper saying, "Congratulations you have gotten through to the second round for the New Zealand Next Top Model." For the second round they just did some filming.

Were you nervous? No, I didn't really care what happened.

How did you feel when you got through to the auditions? Shocked, actually. I was doing it for holiday fun but it was really cool because the people there were really nice. I didn't feel nervous much because it was really easy.

What do you have planned for this year? In general, I have netball, soccer and squash. On Mondays and Tuesdays I go to Topec and then for the rest of the week I have to catch up on the schoolwork I've missed.

Do you have any goals? I've passed Level 1 and want to pass Level 2 with merit and I want to get higher in squash.

Thanks for reading our article!

Clare Henderson (yr 7) and Shearyn Adlam (yr 8)

TOM
THE LOCAL CONNECTION

Coastal Taranaki School Community Library, Okato

The local community library situated on the southern side of Coastal Taranaki School off Oxford Road is a vital resource for our village and its surrounding areas.

The large space offered is a friendly environment suitable for all ages with its vast range of books and magazines as well as computer access all available on site.



For those wanting to entertain their preschoolers the library houses many suitable books including hardback and picture books. There is a variety of books especially suitable for your little ones who don't always want to listen to text. There is a great selection of machinery and digger books for the boys who love machines. In addition, we have a large assortment of high interest books for girls.

There is a wide range of adult fiction (novels) and non-fiction (information books) available. Delwyn is currently looking at purchasing more books and is always open to suggestions from the public for books of interest to add to our library. "I want to buy books that people want to read," says Delwyn.

Within the library there is also a colour photocopier available at the very affordable printing rate of \$0.10 per B & W copy or a colour copy at \$1.00 per sheet. There are seven computers all offering Internet access free of charge. This service has proven to be popular with both locals and tourists visiting the area.

The library welcomes any new members. To become a member, it's as easy as filling out a short form. As a member you have the privilege of borrowing ten books at any one time, with a substantial lending time of one month and no overdue fines!

Come and check out our wonderful library where you can relax on the sofas or chill on the pillows while perusing a book, newspaper, National Geographic or our folder of TOM magazines.

The hours are Monday – Thursday 8.30-4.30pm and Friday 8.30-3.00pm during the school term. If you want to visit when things are a little quieter, 3-4.30pm is a good time. Parking is available adjacent to the library with entry via the double doors.

For those wishing to search the schools library of books by intranet you can access the site at <http://intranet.coastaltaranaki.school.nz/oliver>

You can also visit the Coastal Taranaki School website at www.coastaltaranaki.school.nz

Check out our new edition of this month's book review. We can look forward to seeing more of these in future TOMs.

By Milly Carr

Student Leaders at Coastal Taranaki School 2009

Excited students, staff and parents gathered at a Civic Assembly in the Coastal Taranaki School hall to learn who our student leaders would be for 2009. Most of our year 12 and 13 students attended a leadership camp at TOPEC this year to prepare themselves for these roles.

Students applied in writing for positions of responsibility and submitted their CVs. Senior staff conducted interviews this year and were impressed by the high calibre of the applicants. TOPEC staff were able to observe the students' responses to new situations and cooperative skills within a challenging environment.

Every year senior staff are faced with making difficult decisions, but they are confident that our new leaders will take on their roles with enthusiasm, and will work together to enhance the vision of our school.

This year our Head Boy is Marcus Warren and Head Girl is Toni Winter. They will be supported by William Lower and Danni Newsome in Deputy roles.

Simon Fraser will be the Chairperson of the School Council, with Rebecca Gibson as Secretary and Ashley Downes as Treasurer.

Josh Mahura and Nicola Simpson were appointed as Arts Captains. Mere Mason and Damon Taukamo will be Cultural Captains. Sports at Coastal will be well supported this year with Meisha Davies, Darryn Spademan and Raven Pearce taking on the challenge of Sports Captains.

All of these people are to be congratulated for their success. I know they will take every opportunity to learn and to shine in their new positions. We wish them well for the 2009 year.

Book Review

Juno of Taris is written by New Zealand author Fleur Beale. It is an interesting read on the life of a young girl living in a society very different from our own.

Juno longs to know what life on the "outside" is like, but such questions, as is growing her hair, are forbidden. Juno rebels against these rules and learns more about Taris and the people on it than she bargained for.

I enjoyed this book because it gave me insight into what life could be like if a bunch of people were living on an island isolated from the rest of the world. I would recommend this book to people who like stories with an element of reality.

By Kimberley Downes



Head girl Toni Winter receiving her badge from Principal Allan Miles.



Head boy Marcus Warren.

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New teaching staff at CTS

Sandi Hickey

What's the year group you teach? Year 1 and Year 13

How have the first couple of weeks been for you? I've really enjoyed it so far. I've enjoyed imparting the knowledge I have to the students.

What did you do before you came here? I was a practising artist. I studied at Massey University for my Teacher's Diploma, secondary level, and then degree studied for four years to complete a Bachelor of Visual Arts.

How many years have you been teaching? I'm a beginning teacher, first year after training.

What do you enjoy most about Coastal Taranaki School? I enjoy seeing the students with smiles and teaching them and saying "hi" to everyone.

What are your goals for the future? To maintain professional teaching skills regarding classroom content.

Sally Laing

What level do you teach at? From year 7 right up to year 13.

How have your first few weeks been so far? Great, a very steep learning curve.

Have you liked teaching at C.T.S? Yes, excited to be teaching here, everybody is being very polite and friendly towards me.

What job did you have before you came here? I have been running my own business designing, making, and teaching jewellery and small metal work from my home studio.

How many years have you taught for? 3 weeks, but about 20 years in polytechnic and privately.

What have you enjoyed about C.T.S? Getting to know students and staff.

Tina Gallie

What level do you teach at? New Entrants.

How have the first couple of days been? Fantastic I love it!

What did you do before you came to Coastal? I worked at Bubbles early childhood centre and before that at Eltham Kindy.

Have you enjoyed it here at C.T.S so far? Yes I love it!

How many years have you taught for? Five years altogether.

What do you like best about C.T.S.? How friendly and welcoming everyone is.

What are your goals for the year/future? To keep learning and growing as a teacher.



Sandi Hickey.



Sally Laing.



Tina Gallie.



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Steve Ralph: TOPEC Director

Steve Ralph is a passionate man and one of his passions is TSB TOPEC (Taranaki Outdoor Education Pursuits Education Centre), of which he is Director.

Welsh by birth, Kiwi by adoption, he went to primary school in Pencoed, South Wales, moved to Gloucestershire for his secondary education and then to Devon to complete a four year teaching degree. There he met his wife, Karla, who was doing the same course. They both launched careers teaching physical education in Poole, Dorset, in 1992.

It was while they were taking a break exploring (climbing mountains) in Jasper in the Canadian Rockies that they decided to get married. Steve's parents didn't seem too fazed by missing the wedding, and the big party they threw when Steve and Karla got back to England provided some compensation. After four years of teaching in Dorset, they began to feel it was time for a change. Moving anywhere would be a challenge they decided, so it might just as well be intercontinental as intercity. They began to look for teacher exchange opportunities in Canada or, perhaps, New Zealand, which they had never visited. Arrangements for a year long job in Perth (no, not in Canada or New Zealand) had recently fallen over when Steve spotted an advertisement for head of the Physical Education (P.E.) department in Opunake. He had no idea where that was and a search of a big, old, leather-bound Oxford Atlas in the school library ensued. "I didn't own an atlas that showed anywhere that small," grinned Steve. He sent off his CV and waited. Hearing nothing for a time, he had given up on the idea. Late one evening, however, he received a phone call. "This is Ken Harland, Principal of Opunake High School," the voice announced. Steve made a smart retort, assuming it was his Auckland friend "taking the Mickey." It was Ken on the phone alright, and an interview followed. Steve was offered the job and was given a week to make a decision. He set out for New Zealand in 1997, carrying a single suitcase and leaving Karla behind to continue searching for a suitable position for herself.

Steve's Auckland friends met him at the Auckland airport and drove him down the centre of the Island via The Forgotten World Highway. Halting in Whangamomona, his friends announced that they had arrived. Steve wondered what on earth he'd gotten himself into! He was pretty relieved when the engine was re-kindled and the journey continued. They camped overnight "in a gravel pit somewhere along the Wiremu Road," and when they arrived in Opunake the following morning they had to wait for dawn to reveal Steve's new home. His relief that it wasn't another Whanga was immense!

There was little competition at his first Opunake High School gala soon after his arrival, as he bid for all the household chattels he would need to survive as a bachelor during his first term and to set up home in one of the schoolhouses while awaiting Karla's arrival. As luck would have it, their separation was short because within two weeks of taking up his position, another job teaching P.E. at the school came up. Karla fitted the bill! Since then, they've bought a house on Upper Kaihihi Road and had two children, Hope (8) and India (6). "They're kiwis!" announces Steve proudly. In 2004 Steve took up the position of Deputy Principal and teacher of Physical and Outdoor Education at Coastal Taranaki School. Throughout his time working in Opunake and Okato, he had been involved with TOPEC. He took students to courses there and was the teacher representative on its Board. Then, in 2006, an opportunity almost too good to be true turned up. TSB TOPEC was looking for a new Director. Steve applied and won his "dream job." He was so chuffed when he heard, he "whooped" down the school corridor!

TSB TOPEC is a not-for-profit organisation set up in 1987 by Taranaki Secondary Schools. Although it provides some corporate team-building and professional development for teachers and community groups, most of its work is with year 7-13 students and it provides for NCEA unit standards. Steve's teaching and educational management backgrounds stand him in good stead, he believes, to tailor TOPEC's operation to meet the needs of students and their schools. "And I get paid to play!" he says gleefully.

In addition to his responsibilities for day-to-day management and long term strategic planning, he gets to instruct students in all the disciplines that the five day residential courses offer – "adventure based learning" which includes problem solving and team building, as well as tramping, mountaineering, rock climbing, abseiling, caving, rafting, kayaking, orienteering, body boarding and surfing. "The courses challenge kids mentally, physically and socially," Steve asserts. "We try to put them under pressure so they can see how they react; then they can learn from that experience. We encourage respect for self, others and the

environment," he says. "At the same time, they get to see how beautiful New Zealand really is."

You can learn more about TSB TOPEC at www.tsbtopec.co.nz.

Another of Steve's passions is tramping in Nepal. Read about his adventures there in next month's edition of TOM.

Story and picture by Kerry Lilley



Steve in his working clothes.



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Local Son Revisits Okato

Local man John O'Sullivan, his wife Anita and their daughter Darcy were in Okato recently to visit John's parents, Trisha and Bernard.

John, who grew up in the township, attended Okato College and then Sacred Heart College in Auckland before gaining degrees in law and chemistry at Otago University. He met Anita, a physiotherapist, during his student days. They worked in Wellington before he and Anita headed off to London for their OE. They've been living there for 8 years now, John working as a lawyer in banking Anita practising physiotherapy and teaching Pilates.

Their daughter, Darcy Jean, was born at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington on 13 October 2008. During her visit here, she enjoyed cuddles with her grandma, hanging out with her cousins Sol and Marcel, paddling in the sea at Oakura Beach and helping her granddad round up the cows.

The family is looking forward to returning to New Zealand to settle before too long.

Story and picture by Kerry Lilley

Anita and Darcy enjoy Barnes and Trisha's summer garden.



Young Living – A new philosophy

Young Living was founded in 1989 by Gary Young on his farm in Washington, USA. From a humble beginning the company has grown to become the largest supplier of essential oils in the world, and it is also the world leader in the research and development, production and distribution of therapeutic-grade essential oils. Due to its growth in the international market place the company is soon to launch its newest office here in New Zealand.

Essential oils, often referred to as "nature's living energy", are aromatic liquids derived from shrubs, flowers, trees, roots, bushes, and seeds. From perfumes and aromatherapy to cooking and medicinal purposes, essential oils have been a part of everyday life dating back to 4500 BC.

There is a significant difference between essential oils that are used for their aroma and those that are therapeutic grade. The idea of an essential oil being able to enhance ones physical well being or assist the body to heal itself is one that may be foreign to some of us. Yet numerous studies have shown that essential oils contain naturally occurring plant compounds which when carefully distilled so as not to damage or fracture their delicate molecules, and when produced free of synthetic chemicals and carrier oils, have proven to be extremely beneficial for every body function. Plant distillation is the only method of extracting therapeutic compounds from plants which allows the essential oil, or the "life blood" of the plant to remain intact.

Therapeutic-grade essential oils are much more than an aroma. If you would like more information please phone Debbie Baronian 06 7524905 or 027 632 5901

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External Makeover for Cafe Lahar

WOW, what an impressive visual delight we have in our village. I discovered this masterpiece a few weekends ago as I was walking through the village with my kids and their friends. We were fortunate enough to watch the artists putting their finishing touches on the Eastern wall of the Cafe Lahar. It looked like fun to me, but definitely an art. The skill, the eye and the vision was a wonder.

"Wow, that is cool," said my kids. "How do they do it?" It looked like they needed plenty of spray paint cans anyway!!



Cafe Lahar's impressive paint job.

Laurent, cafe owner, comments, "I wanted to add some colour to the building." I contacted the owner, Blair, of CSA Surfboards at Oakura, to come and work his magic. Blair is creative!

The new mural portrays the image of the coast with the mountain and surf.

Next time you're in the village, grab a great coffee and check it out.

By Milly Carr.

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Vospers funeral director Bruno Egli, pictured with his wife Kathi, has also been an ordained minister for over 25 years. By choice, after taking early retirement, they came back to New Plymouth to enjoy being with their grandchildren and extended family.

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