



Lake Whakamaru Reserve is a hidden gem waiting to be explored. With its crystal-clear waters, lush greenery and abundant wildlife, it's the perfect destination for nature lovers and outdoor enthusiasts alike. Just don't forget to bring your camera to capture the breathtaking scenery!

Quest to be the BEST driving Tīrau baker's business excellence

When it comes to Tīrau there can be little debate as to its most famous fixtures; they are large, corrugated and renowned across the motu. But located just a few metres further down the road is a shop which is fast forging its own reputation as a must-stop destination.

The Baker Tīrau is now home to one of New Zealand's best steak and cheese pies, following their bronze medal win at 2024 Bakels Supreme Pie Awards earlier this year.

The triumph isn't just one for owner Shane Kearns and his crew of 11 local employees, but indeed the whole of the South Waikato, with The Baker Tīrau's outstanding products and service attracting new visitors to the District in addition to satisfying the appetites of countless hungry locals.

"We've been here six years and have been trying every year to win it," says Kearns, who has previously been a winner at the awards on three occasions with past businesses.

"We'd had a few top 10 placings with The Baker Tīrau, but now we have the bronze I know we are on the right path. This was confirmation that we are almost there."

Having previously run a bakery in Kihikihi, Kearns and his family – wife Kathy and daughters Rachel and Paige – relocated to Tīrau and opened the business in 2018 and have since immersed themselves in the community.

He describes the decision to move to the South Waikato as "the best move of our lives" and paid tribute to the communities who have been "nothing but supportive".



Kearns said outside of the accolades and seeing happy customers, it's been watching young people from the District come through the business and go on to have successful careers of their own that has been most pleasing. "It's a steppingstone for most young people, they learn how to make coffees, serve people, do baking and then move on to whatever they want to do in life. I really enjoy seeing the young people come in and get that start. There's so many that have gone on and started their own businesses now; it's really great to see."

An emerging success story from The Baker Tīrau's stable is Kearns' apprentice Benjamin Crosby.

The 18-year-old was this June named third-place winner at the Apprentice Pie Maker Awards, adding to the ever-growing list of accolades that sit with the business and its people.

Most recently, that included being recognised for two awards at the Putāruru Business Awards.

Kearns says the goal now is to win the Supreme Award at the national competition next year, something which if achieved he believes will be huge not only for The Baker Tīrau, but the wider town and District as a whole.

"I am feeling very positive for next year," Kearns says. "If we should do well and get a gold medal I know how good it would be for business, but it would also be good for the whole town because there'd be an on-flow."

"You bring people in and while they are here they are going to have a look around the town and District; I think it benefits us all."

IN HOUSE

Produced in-house for South Waikato residents by the SWDC communications team:

Lisa Chunder, Corey Rosser and Grace Ratima



YOUNG PROFESSIONALS THRIVE WITH GOVERNANCE MENTORING PROGRAMME



L-R: Norman Barker, Gray Baldwin, Kiani Tuhua, Leighton Littlewood, Chloe Jones, Arama Ngapo and John Natua

A couple of local professionals are succeeding in governance, thanks to the help of a Governance Mentoring Programme led by South Waikato Investment Fund Trust and facilitated by Mentoring Foundation NZ. Funded by Community Governance Aotearoa, as part of their National Action Plan for Community Governance, the six-month initiative has been life-changing for participants Chloe Jones, a 26-year-old Regional Operations Manager for Fonterra and John Natua, a New Zealand-born Cook Islands father of four who has worked in the public sector for over 20 years.

Chloe, who juggles three jobs in the farming industry and serves as the volunteer Board Chair for NZ Young Farmers, joined the programme with an open mind, eager to improve her governance skills. "I went in blind with no expectations, and it turned out to be the best approach I could've had," Chloe said. The programme paired her with Gray Baldwin, a seasoned board member of Farmlands and Ballance, who shared her farming interests. Their relationship grew through regular one-on-one meetings, where they discussed various governance scenarios over coffee." Gray

and I had open and honest conversations about different topics, diving deep into the weeds," she said. These situational discussions provided Chloe with valuable insights into the complexities of governance.

John, who currently works for Te Whatu Ora as a Portfolio Lead in Integrated Funding and Contracting, also found the programme beneficial. "I wanted to join the programme so that I could gain some experience and knowledge in governance. The idea of teaming up with a mentor was what attracted me to the programme," he said.

He was paired with Norm Barker, an experienced Board Member who has served on boards like Trust Waikato, South Waikato District Council, and Waikato Regional Council. "Norm was very generous with his knowledge and happy to share his experiences," John said.

"One of the best pieces of advice Norm gave me was that governance needs to be strategic and intentional." Both participants noted how the programme and advice from their respective mentors had changed their approach to Board meetings and helped deliver positive outcomes.

The pair's journeys highlight the power of local support and mentorship.

As proud products of Putāruru and Tokoroa, this programme has not only enhanced their skills but also enabled them to contribute significantly to the South Waikato community.

SWIFT is now calling for expressions of interest for future governance mentoring and training programmes. Professionals eager to improve their governance skills and contribute to their communities are encouraged to contact SWIFT via email at info@swift.org.nz.



"As a young professional at the start of my governance career, hearing from someone with a different experience that it's normal for things to vary was reassuring."

SOUTH WAIKATO CULTURAL FESTIVAL BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER



The South Waikato Cultural Festival showcased the rich diversity of our District on 21 September. The event, which was supported by the Council and other local organisations, saw 17 schools and kura from around the South Waikato come together to perform to a crowd of thousands throughout the day at the South Waikato Sport and Events Centre. "Strong cultural identity and opportunities to celebrate that, play a key role in healthy communities, especially for a place as diverse as the South Waikato," Council's Principal Engagement Advisor Marama Tahapehi said. "To see so many families and members of the public come together to celebrate that – regardless of what culture or cultures they themselves may come from – is truly a special thing." Stephani Preston, or 'whaea Preston' to the tamariki who know her, has been involved in the event for more than 15 years and is heartened to see it go from strength-to-strength. She said while the majority of the performances have a heavy Māori or Pasifika flavour, it's an event for everyone. "I can't emphasise enough how events like this bring people together. Whether you are Indian, Japanese, Filipino or otherwise, the South Waikato is a place for you."

MAYORAL SCHOLARSHIP HELPS PHAYER SURVEY HIS OPTIONS



Four years ago receiving a South Waikato District Council Mayoral Scholarship helped set Colin Phayer on a path which will soon take him to Brisbane to kick off a new adventure working in surveying.

The Tokoroa product is in the final stages of a four-year Bachelor of Surveying Degree at Otago University and recently signed on for his first full-time gig after going through what is known in the surveying industry as “hunting season”.

“We just had two weeks of hunting season, where a bunch of companies come down and see if you’re interested in working with them,” Colin says.

An active member of the Tokoroa community, particularly in his chosen sport of judo, Colin attended Amisfield School, Tokoroa Intermediate and Tokoroa High School growing up.

Despite now living in Dunedin and soon to be Brisbane, Colin maintains a strong link to the District through his mum Carol Bovey and dad Andrew Phayer. Carol is heavily involved in the Tokoroa Judo Club, while Andrew is head of mathematics at Tokoroa High School.

Colin says regardless of where he ends up in his career, he’ll always credit the South Waikato District Council Mayoral Scholarship for helping him to get started at university.



“That money gives you a boost of funds at the start of each semester,” Colin says. You’d almost forget you had it coming and it definitely helped a lot. It meant I was able to dedicate myself solely to study and not have to get a job, that extra money really helps. First semester helped with getting everything ready, settling into a flat, buying appliances and everything you need for university living. It’s always come at a perfect time.”

Since starting the Mayoral Scholarship Fund in 2006 the Council has helped more than 22 young people realise their study dreams and career aspirations. “Colin is a great example of what the Mayoral Scholarship is all about and how it can help our rangatahi of South Waikato,” South Waikato Mayor Gary Petley says.

“The vision for a thriving community and robust economy in our District depends greatly on the education opportunities available to our young people, so I’m very happy to be able to offer this Scholarship.”

Tokoroa Intermediate School’s Rusty Demon eVLocity team is gearing up for their next big competition, and they need your help! They need donations of 2-3 sets of safety gear, including leather gloves, full-faced helmets, and motocross clothing or overalls suitable for 11-12 year olds. Your support will ensure the young racers stay safe and perform their best.

To learn more about eVLocity and how you can contribute: visit - eVLocity. <https://evolocity.co.nz/>



WHAT'S HOT

WHAT'S NOT

Illegal dumping costs ratepayers thousands of dollars each year in contractor fees for cleanup. The community is encouraged to report any illegal dumping to the Council at (07) 885 0340 or online at South Waikato District Council’s website.

Simply scan the QR code to access the portal directly. Let’s keep our community clean!



NAU MAI (WELCOME) TO OUR NEWEST NEW ZEALAND CITIZENS

On 30 August Mayor Gary Petley and South Waikato District Council hosted 10 new citizens at a Citizenship Ceremony. For our new citizens hailing from South Africa, India, United Kingdom, Samoa, Taiwan, Philippines and Cambodia the public ceremony was the last step in their journey to becoming New Zealand citizens.

After the formalities, they received their official citizenship certificates and were gifted a native tree to remember the special day.

On behalf of the South Waikato community, we'd like to extend a warm welcome to our new citizens.

Nau mai haere mai! We're glad you're here.





SOUTH WAIKATO'S FAST GROUP WINS AT CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND WOOD COUNCIL AWARDS

Fast Group Managing Director Smiley Alexander received the Outstanding Health and Safety Management Award. Fast Frontier Logging's Neihana Brewer was the winner of the Trainee of the Year award and Levi Casey, also from Fast Frontier Logging, was runner-up in this category. Laura Solomon-Ahipu, from the same company, was runner-up in the Log Processor excellence category.

The South Waikato Investment Fund Trust (SWIFT) and South Waikato District Council fund the Generation Programme, a training pathway for young people leading to local employment opportunities in the forestry sector.

The latest 15-week programme kicked off in Tokoroa on 5 August. Maybe someone on that programme will in years to come emulate Min Tobenhouse's achievements!

South Waikato company Fast Group won multiple awards at the recent Central North Island Wood Council Awards.

Fast Harvesting Health & Safety Co-ordinator Min Tobenhouse won the Central North Island Wood Council's Good Deed Award for her actions after a fire destroyed the garage and its contents on a property of fellow Fast Group employee Lorraine Uatuku.

Min took it upon herself and rallied a working bee that dismantled, cleaned up and removed the building then set up a koha fund to replace all the lost possessions. Min also won the Central North Island Wood Council Female in Forestry Award in 2022.



Manulife Forest Management's Rona Wheelson (left) presents the Award to Fast Group MD Smiley Alexander. The award is sponsored by Tiaki Plantations Company, Taumata Plantations and Manulife.



Min Tobenhouse (left) receives the Good Deed Award from Joe Akari of award sponsor Safetree.

TĪRAU COMMUNITY BOARD WIN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AWARD



Congratulations to the Tirau Community Board on winning the Local Government New Zealand's Enhancing Communities Award for their efforts on transforming the Tirau Domain.

The project has seen the reserve be revived to become a community asset once again. Key improvements include a pedestrian crossing for the railway line and a suspension bridge over the Oraka Stream. Board chair Jessica Wanden (pictured above left), who accepted the award on 23 August, credited over a decade of collaborative efforts from the Tirau Community Board, Domain Action Group, South Waikato District Council and the community. She highlighted the Domain's revival as a community asset, now popular for walks, bike rides and picnics.

Judges praised the project as an example of local government enhancing lives. Mayor Gary Petley emphasised the importance of such spaces for community thriving. He congratulated Jessica and all involved for their dedication.

SWIFT SCHOLARSHIP HELPS RENEE HIRINI TO ACHIEVE NURSING DREAM

Renee Hirini is a mum who is on track to complete her three-year nursing degree with the help of a \$5,000 scholarship from the South Waikato Investment Fund Trust (SWIFT). Renee says her nursing degree will enable her to make a difference for the South Waikato community by helping to provide better healthcare.

Renee was raised in Tirau and Matamata with her koro, who passed away due to medical conditions. "I saw the gap in the healthcare system and wanted to support other whānau in the community. I have seen the positive impact healthcare professionals have made in Tokoroa, which inspired me to pursue this degree. More Māori and Pasifika nurses and doctors are needed because our people are overrepresented in every major health issue," Renee explains.

"I was grateful to be one of the 23 recipients selected for the SWIFT scholarship. It was a straightforward process with clear guidelines and SWIFT were incredibly supportive.

"I received \$4,000 which went directly to Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology and \$1,000 to cover student costs which I have used for travel expenses for classes in Rotorua and clinical placements in Taupō."

Renee lives in Tokoroa with her partner and three-year-old daughter and juggles motherhood and nursing studies.



"Balancing clinical practice with study and caring for my little whānau has been challenging but pushes you to grow. I am trying to show my daughter anything is possible." Renee encourages anyone from South Waikato to apply for a SWIFT scholarship.

"Often Māori and Pasifika students come from low-decile schools or low-income families. Despite these challenges, we are fully capable of excelling in whatever paths we choose. SWIFT scholarships provide financial support to access educational opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach."

A thriving community and robust economy that outpaces the rest of New Zealand.



A LONG TERM PLAN THAT ACHIEVES BALANCE FOR THE SOUTH WAIKATO

The newly-adopted South Waikato District Council Long Term Plan 2024-2034 achieves the difficult balance of keeping rate increases low at the same time as continuing to offer the same level of service delivery to the community. Through the period of the Long Term Plan (LTP), average rate increases for the South Waikato are among the lowest in the country, despite Council maintaining the breadth and quality of services. With a need to stop borrowing for its day-to-day costs and start building up reserves to replace assets such as water treatment plants, Council will address financial challenges by committing through this Plan to adopting better ways of working with more efficiency and more cost effectiveness, which avoids further increasing the burden on members of the community already struggling with the cost of living. Over the life of the plan Council aims to achieve \$29m of savings, at the same time as addressing urgent maintenance or upgrades to core infrastructure and focusing on key initiatives required to lift the District out of its current levels of deprivation.

Over the next 10 years, Council will stop borrowing for operational costs and will instead begin to fund its depreciation. This means in the future there will be less borrowing for maintenance and renewal of infrastructure.

Some of the major focuses



The Future of the South Waikato Pools

An important community asset that supports the health and wellbeing of our people, Council faced the prospect of losing the South Waikato Indoor Pools forever if there was further inaction on the facility or a continuation of the patch-and-go approach from recent years. Council has made room for a \$17m investment, spread over years one and two of the Long Term Plan, which will future proof the pools for years to come. Delaying the work wouldn't have made a substantial difference to rates and would have

created more uncertainty around project costs.

Shifting from rates to those who benefit

Council have adjusted our fees and charges so that where appropriate, the user who benefits from the service pays for it rather than being a burden on general ratepayers. There was broad support for this approach and the kaupapa is in line with the financial direction Council started in 2023 and is the best move for our District's long-term future.

Pensioner Housing

In order to recover costs to continue maintaining these facilities, rent increases were necessary for pensioner housing. Following consultation with the community, Council moved to halve the proposed rent increases for the 2024-2025 financial year and instead spread the increases over two years in order to give residents more time to adjust to the new rents.

Leak Detectors and Water Metres

Council has budgeted for water metre implementation work to start in year three of the Long Term Plan, subject to consultation with the community as part of the annual plan process for that year. This will assist with leak detection and encourage efficient water use, ensuring services and facilities meet the collective needs of the community. The upcoming review of the National Policy Statement for Fresh Water could limit Council's ability to increase the intake of drinking water from streams and rivers. Climate change modeling also suggests future water availability may be constrained, requiring communities to use water more efficiently.

Housing Development

Council would like to see more opportunities for whānau to own their own homes and has developed a Growth Plan to ensure that there is sufficient residential and business land to provide and encourage growth in the District. If Council is seen to be proactive in providing for growth and encouraging development, it will give developers greater confidence to invest in the South Waikato.

You can read the full Long Term Plan 2024-2034 on southwaikato.govt.nz



Tokoroa Public Library is moving to a new temporary home! The library will be closed between 17-24 November while the move happens, but will be back fully operational from 25 November at 211 Leith Place.

During this time the Putāruru Library (located in the Jim Howland Service Centre in Overdale Street) and Tirau Library service (located in The Dog) will continue to operate.

Contact the library with any questions on 07 886 6574 or library.info@southwaikato.govt.nz.

Removing the driver licence barrier in South Waikato



Not having a driver licence prevents thousands of young people in provincial New Zealand from getting a job, helping their families or leading fulfilling lives.

In 2020 South Waikato Investment Fund Trust (SWIFT) decided to help remove the driver licence barrier by offering free driver licences, training and support to every high school student attending a school in the South Waikato District, across all the District's high schools. Since the project began 692 students have gained a learner restricted or full driver licence.

Since January 2023 the programme has been run by Putāruru-based Transform Aotearoa Charitable Trust. Since 1 January 2024 the programme has provided 140 driving lessons enabling 65 students to gain learner licences, 30 to gain restricted licences (with 20 more have been booked for October and November) and one to gain a full licence. Transform Aotearoa CEO Howard Goold says his organisation shares the same goal as SWIFT to enable the district's young people. "We have been doing a driver training programme for senior high school students for the last few years and we have a high pass rate. We have a system that seems to be working."

SWIFT Chief Executive Amanda Hema says, "We could see the high success rate Transform Aotearoa was having in Putāruru and wanted to roll that out across South Waikato. We approached them to see if they would run our driver training programme."

Transform Aotearoa Putāruru Community Liaison Lamen Hohaia, who is the main driving instructor for the programme, says instructors need to get onto a level where the students can trust them. Lamen is assisted by his daughter Amber Hohaia.

Amanda said SWIFT was created by South Waikato District Council in 2014 to drive economic and social benefit across the District. "In order to drive economic growth, we first need to put in place the social building blocks. That's why SWIFT funds not-for-profit organisations to deliver education and training opportunities to enable people to enter the workforce."

NEWS FROM THE PLAZA



SAVE THE DATES!

Events happening at The Plaza:

- OCT 31** Pride in Putāruru - AGM
- NOV 1** Hon Louise Upston MP for Taupo - Friendly Forum at 9.30am
- NOV 9** Trust Waikato Symphony Orchestra From the new world concert at 3pm \$22.75 Adult - \$16.20 Senior - \$5 Student - Children FREE!
- NOV 11** South Waikato Arts Trust AGM at 6pm
- NOV 13** Ladies Night Dinner from 6pm
- NOV 16** Rotary Talent show from 6pm
- NOV 16** South Waikato Rate Payers Association meeting
- NOV 17** November Sunday Movie: 2pm
- NOV 21** SWPICS Vaccination pop up clinic from 2pm to 4pm
- NOV 23** Community Gardens fundraising quiz night - \$15 per person
- DEC 1** Christmas film - The Polar Express at 10am & 12pm. FREE entry!



CONTACT THE PLAZA

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NAVIGATING ROADWORKS WITH EASE: TIPS FOR SAFE TRAVEL

With spring in the air and warmer weather upon us, it's not just the flowers that are popping up—roadworks are too! Major roadworks are underway on both district highways and local roads within the South Waikato District. Here are some tips to help you navigate these changes smoothly.

Road works current and future

- Full closure from SH1/SH32 intersection in Tokoroa to SH1/SH30 intersection near Ātiāmuri from 7 October for six weeks (weather permitting).
- SH28 Putāruru to SH32 Tokoroa: Late November – 23 December 2024
- SH30 Ātiāmuri to SH5 Wairakei part 2: November – December 2024.

Before you travel

- Check for updates: Visit the Waka Kotahi website and click on the "Traffic and Travel" button for the latest roadworks information.

On the road

- Stay calm and patient: Road crews are working to improve our roads for safer driving.
- Pay attention: Follow all road signs to avoid accidents.
- Obey speed limits: Driving too fast can damage new surfaces, while driving too slow can cause the road to stick to your tyres.
- Maintain distance: Keep extra distance between vehicles and watch for brake lights.
- Stay focused: Avoid distractions like texting or changing music.
- Follow directions: Adhere to instructions from "Stop/Go" staff.
- Be alert: Watch for workers, vehicles, or equipment that may enter your lane unexpectedly.

Manulife Forest Management (NZ) Participates in Keep NZ Beautiful Week



For the fourth consecutive year, Manulife Forest Management (MFM) NZ has participated in Keep NZ Beautiful Week. It was a well-coordinated event with participation from MFM NZ staff, local forestry businesses, forestry contractors, and others.

Karl Boobyer, Environmental Forester, says MFM's involvement is driven by their commitment to responsible land stewardship. "The company dedicates significant resources each year to protect and enhance the environment. Illegal dumping of rubbish poses a significant challenge to these efforts, making the removal of such waste a high priority for the company," he said.

This year, the cleanup effort saw the registration of 30 vehicles, with additional volunteers and family members joining in. The focus areas included public roads, forestry gates and forest fringes—locations that are easily accessible.

Despite the less-than-ideal weather conditions, the team made some interesting finds. Among the large items collected were appliances, bedding, children's toys, nappies, recycling and clothing. A significant amount of construction waste was also found. Tyres were a common find.

Karl thanked Council and all volunteers for supporting the initiative. "MFM NZ hopes that the cleanup will encourage people to adopt proper waste disposal practices. Many items that are illegally dumped can be disposed of for free through urban kerbside collection, the Tokoroa Transfer Station, or local metal recyclers," he said.



READ IN TOUCH? PROVE IT...

... and be in to WIN a lucky dip \$50 supermarket voucher.

We will be running this competition every issue. The answers to the five questions below are in this issue – October 2024. You have to get them all correct to be in the draw.

Text your answers and your name to 027 287 5980 or private message our Facebook page by 30 November 2024.

1. **How long has the Baker been in Tīrau?**
2. **In which year did the Mayoral Scholarship Fund start?**
3. **Name the Programme that provides a training pathway for young people to enter the forestry sector.**
4. **Name one of the key improvements to the Tīrau Domain.**
5. **Name one of the focus areas of the Long Term Plan.**

Congratulations to Mark from Lichfield who was drawn as the lucky winner for the August In Touch competition. Thank you to all those who entered. Try again this issue!

The correct answers were:

1. Drop, Cover, Hold
2. 12%
3. Dirty nappies, eggs, offal
4. 1 September
5. Required by legislation, high public interest, high cost



Antenno is a mobile phone app that is FREE for users to download from Google Play or the App Store.

Install the app. Input your specific address(es) – home, work, play, and we send you messages relevant to your address. Users can also use the app to report issues or ideas to us.



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