

BARFOOT & THOMPSON

LICENSED REAA 2008

YOUNG

AUCKLAND
WRITERS
FESTIVAL
—
WAITUHI O TĀMAKI

20
21 **AUTHORS**
CHALLENGE

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YOUNG 11 MAY - 26 JULY 2021 AUTHORS CHALLENGE

PRIZE POOL

Category winners will each receive a **\$500** cash prize and books valued at **\$250**

Their school will also receive a **\$1000** cash prize and books valued at **\$1000**

Calling all creative young writers!

The Young Authors Challenge is a short story competition and we want to hear from you. Put words to paper and tell us all about **someone special who you look up to in your community** and you can win some incredible prizes!

Send submissions to youngauthorschallenge@barfoot.co.nz with your name, age, school and the title of your story.

For more information and T&Cs go to barfoot.co.nz/about-us/supporting-our-community/young-authors-challenge



Winners will be announced on **23rd August 2021** and celebrated at a special reading ceremony

School competition categories

Primary: up to 250 words, Intermediate: up to 500 words, Secondary: up to 750 words

AUCKLAND
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FESTIVAL
—
WAIHUHI O TĀMAKI

PRIMARY CATEGORY FINALIST: ALICIA WOOD

FRAN

I have two sisters, one older and one younger, but I'm going to talk about my older sister, Franziska.

Franziska, or Fran for short, is a year nine at Marist College and is thirteen. She influences me in many ways. Without her I wouldn't compete in gymnastics and dance or be going to Marist next year. I'd probably be super shy.

My sister has a very valuable role in my family. Since she is the oldest in the family, she has responsibilities like, she takes out the trash, she looks after me and my little sister Ruby, and she sometimes cooks dinner.

Fran also helps with my netball team. She's helpful because she plays on a highschool level. Netball isn't just the only sport she does. Like I mentioned before, she does gymnastics and dancing. Now she plays tennis with her friend.

She has a lot of tricks and talents. When she was around the age of nine she started doing cool hairstyles on dolls, this year she even gave herself a new haircut. Franziska also can sew and joined a sewing club at school when she was in year seven. What I think is cool is that she can do voices. She can do accents and character voices.

Fran is a great role model. She's super funny, smart, has lots of friends, and she's really brave. I'm so lucky that she's my sister and part of this community.

PRIMARY CATEGORY FINALIST: DUAA AMAR

USTADA SUFIA

The person I look up to in my community is none other than one of my teachers. But this teacher is not in school, she is an after school teacher. I have classes with her on Tuesday and Thursday at 31 Armada Drive, Ranui Mosque. So if you haven't already guessed she is a Quran teacher. Her name is Sufia. We have to call her Ustadah Sufia, which means teacher. Our class is 5pm - 7pm. Her husband runs the Mosque. She is smart and intelligent by the way she teaches and speaks, even though there's like 19 people in the Mosque she still makes it work! She lives right next to the Mosque so she doesn't have a problem getting to the Mosque. She is a teacher because she is an expert in her field. She also teaches us different stories and rules about Islam which I think is very generous and kind! Sufia means to have a clean meaning pure heart. And of course her name is telling very much the truth. She teaches in a way that anyone could understand! The fact that she takes off all her time so she can teach us is amazing. She sparks knowledge in whomever she teaches and sees. So all I want to do is share her presence in this world to everyone else because she changed my life for the better! Thank you for reading my story and please admire my amazing, kind, righteous, nice and beautiful teacher Ustadah Sufia!

PRIMARY CATEGORY FINALIST: KATELYN METOYER

MY NANNY

My nanny is sweet and humble. She is also smart and talented and not shy. Tall with long black straight hair and big brown chocolate coloured eyes, my nanny has a beautiful smile that makes me smile too. She is grateful for everything and a loving nanny. Her favourite colours are orange and yellow. She works at Graphic Packaging making cereal boxes and all sorts. She drives her fork hoist in a colossal warehouse wearing a bright orange uniform. If you see her driving her fork hoist, I'll tell you she looks cute on it. She works long hours which makes me worry. I love my nanny and when I grow older, I will look after her like what she did with me. My nanny loves her family and their children and does everything she can to help them. I look up to my nanny and I am very proud of her because of what she does for me. She helps me with my homework and takes me to my sports. I love that she always supports me in everything I do or have a go at. She brought me up since I was a baby and she always kept me warm and safe. She gives me massive hugs which are full of love, and she calls me minion and her number one.

INTERMEDIATE CATEGORY FINALIST: EMMA HOLLAND

MY ROCK

Someone trustworthy and compassionate, those are the best kind of people. That's exactly what Mumma Sarah is. Mumma Sarah is one of the most amazing people I know. She stepped in when we really needed her.

My dad has always worked full time and so did my mum until I was born. My mum decided to stay home with me. Then my brother was born and my mum ended up staying home with us for eight years. She would walk us to and from school every day. My mum decided to go back to work after her long time off, so we relied on my Nanni to pick us up and drop us to our after school activities. Soon after, my nanni fell ill and sadly passed away. My mum did not want to stay at home again. We finally had more money to go to more exhilarating places. Work was going so well quitting was just not an option for mum. We didn't know what to do. Me and my brother Jake did not want to give up all our activities after school like dance and soccer.

That's when our smiles returned. Sarah was on the school committee with my mum and offered to look after me and Jake. She said she would pick us up from school with her daughter and son as they went to the same school as us and drop us to our activities.

The first week we went to Sarah's I instantly felt comfortable. I knew she was empathetic and dependable. I knew she cared about me. Sarah dropped me at dance every day of the week. She would give me afternoon tea and ask about my day. My brother and I went there every afternoon from then on.

Sarah showed she loved us unconditionally and gave me my space when I needed it. Sarah was like a second mother to me. That's how Sarah's name became Mumma Sarah. But it wasn't just a name to me. To me it was like a sign that waved softly in the breeze. It was a sign that read trustworthy, jubilant, caring and kind.

Mumma Sarah looked after me and Jake for years, always supporting us and being there for us. Every fight I had with my friends, every time I felt down because something was hard at school, Mumma Sarah would be the first person I would see. She would listen and give me hugs. She would always make sure I was ok. She wouldn't leave my side until I was happy again.

Mumma Sarah is someone very special, someone who inspires me to be a better me. She is always there for me and I know she always will be. She has helped me through highs and lows and cares about me so much. She is someone I can rely on for the rest of my life. She is someone trustworthy and compassionate. She is the best kind of person.

INTERMEDIATE CATEGORY FINALIST: JOANNE CHEN

MY GRANDMA

I look up to someone who is strong, someone who can keep going through the hardest situations. Someone who deserves respect, someone who shows kindness at all times. For me, this person is my grandma.

My grandma grew up and lived most of her life in China. Her family was poor, and like many in her day, she didn't go to school. This meant that she wasn't fluent in Mandarin, Chinese, only in the dialect that the people in her area spoke. But since my sister and I grew up around her and my grandpa who spoke it as their main language, and my parents who sometimes spoke it, we could understand most of the words. She moved to New Zealand with most of her children around 18 years ago.

Ever since I was a few months old, she looked after me and my sister when my parents were at work. She came to our house and fed us, played with us and took us to sleep. Then when we were a few years older, we went to her house instead. Weekdays were spent at kindy. Afterwards, she would come to pick us up after school, where we walked to the bus stop and caught the bus to her house. We stayed there watching tv and playing with toys until our parents picked us up at around 6-ish. On weekends, we spent the whole 2 days at her place. This continued for me and my sister up until year 2 when I was 7. Then my parents had time to look after us themselves.

My favourite day spent at her house was Saturdays. We were dropped off at her place in the morning, where we sometimes ate breakfast if we woke up late. Every Saturday, at Otara, near where she lived, there was a market. We would take the bus there, and, along with my sister and grandpa, we would go there. We usually sat down in a shaded area with our grandpa, while my grandma went around purchasing various vegetables and fruits. Sometimes we would go with her and get hot chips or ice cream, and once, I remember getting a necklace.

What my sister and I would talk and laugh about even today would be the 2-minute noodle secret. When we were young, we loved 2-minute noodles, and we still do. But our parents didn't allow us to eat it because it was 'unhealthy'. Our grandma, though, bought it anyway, and we got to eat 2-minute noodles! When our parents asked what we ate for lunch, we would say something like rice.

I appreciate many things about my grandma, and now, she is a healthy 83-year-old lady, who sometimes comes to look after my younger sisters when my parents are busy. There may be no more hot chips, ice cream, necklaces or 2-minute noodles, but my sister and I both know, we cherish our grandma even if we don't spend as much time together as we used to.

INTERMEDIATE CATEGORY FINALIST: RYLEE BARRETT

FREED

From the first day I met Mrs Wallen, she has made me feel this overwhelming sense of acceptance and belonging that has not inhibited me since my parents parted ways. I was a mere 10 years old when my soul was torn in half, I was knocked down, unable to get back on my feet, crying myself to sleep. I was done, sick and tired of insults ringing in my ears. I didn't want things to turn out this way, I wish it upon no one, I am now 13 and stronger than ever because of her guidance. From the moment we first locked eyes to , this minute, this second, she has supported me, lifted me up when my inner demon and my whirlwind of a life are eating me away. She makes me feel like I actually mean something.

The safety I have felt in her company is something absolutely extraordinary. My mum and dad have aimed at each other for years but their bullets almost always land upon my chest. When I am with her the gunshots are a mere pop in the distance. Mrs Wallen has provided me with a safe environment in which I am allowed to express myself without my domestic matters, anxiety and noise sensitivity getting in my way. In her extension literacy classes I have not only learnt how to write but how to relax, joke around for a minute, let my heart soar like the birds whose wings carve the clouds, to be free. She always says that it is "just my job" but she has become more than a teacher to me, she is someone I can go to for advice and encouragement if it is saying that i am an awesome girl or even if it is just a little smiley face in an email or comment, it somewhat makes me feel better. Her advice was especially helpful when my self doubt got the best of me a little earlier this year. She took the time to sit down with me after class to discuss what i could do to stop my self worth from degrading further, she told me "find a way to get that little voice in your head,punch it in the face and say no, you will be a lot happier if you do" And I have been happier, because now i know that someone is there for me, someone cares.

Every day that I come to school I greatly anticipate the moment I would see Mrs Wallen,I have discovered that she means something to me. I feel like something deep inside of me has been rekindled. Although I am not entirely sure what it is, my best guess is hope, hope that a person in this somewhat limitless universe could appreciate me for who I was, a blonde,noise sensitive,socially awkward, nerd.

HIGH SCHOOL CATEGORY FINALIST: JEMMA SCHNELL

A DREAM TO FLY

My brother, Jason, always wanted to be a pilot and after 10 years he finally succeeded.

Jason grew up being interested in planes because his father dreamed of being a pilot and our granddad worked as a small aircraft mechanic, so he quite literally grew up around and in the airport. However, he only started properly learning how to fly at the age of 15. He was given lessons for every Christmas and birthday as a gift. When he was 19, after 4 years of hard work, he got his PPL (Private Pilot License). This was a big moment in his career so far. Having a Private Pilots' Licence means you are able to fly up to 20 people at once, you are just unable to get paid for it. Now 4 years have passed since he got his PPL, in this time he was working on getting his CPL (Commercial Pilots License) and his Instructors Licence and he finally got both in April 2020, but then the world sadly shut down because of COVID, so he was left jobless for a while. South Africa slowly started to open up and he was able to work as a Flight Instructor at the same place he himself learned how to fly. Jason is clear that the best part of his job should be what he gets to see from up high, but more than that it's helping others learn his skill. He says, "Yeah the views are amazing, but I really enjoy helping people pursue their dream. I'll get someone who knows nothing about a plane to eventually know everything they will need to know to move onto the next step in their career".

With reference to his future plans, Jason said, "I have a lot of short-term goals and medium-term goals, but no long-term goals as it is very difficult to know where you are going to end up as a pilot unless you have a set thing you want to work towards. So in the beginning I wanted to be a Charter Pilot. I was set on that for a while, and as I started to fly more and more I started to go with the flow and not have a set end goal. My short-term goal is to do the instrument rating that I have always wanted to do, so I can go from a Grade 3 to a Grade 2 instructor, and my Medium-term goal being that I want to do some bush flying somewhere overseas when the world opens up. At the moment I'm looking at Asia." He explained that where he works there is a 3-grade grading system, Grade 3 being the lowest and 1 being the highest. Grade 3, is the level where he is at the moment. He is working up to Grade 2 now and Grade 1 is the highest rank, his boss.

There was uncertainty a few weeks ago due to civil unrest in South Africa and he was unable to fly for a period of time. The unrest has settled and he will be able to move on with his life and keep working towards his goals. The airport that he is working at has slowly started to open up, meaning he is starting to fly more and more again. Jason needs another year or so to complete the qualifications he needs to further his career. He will continue to work in South Africa for as long as he can, yet will always need to have a backup plan just in case life at home becomes too dangerous and emigration becomes the best option for him and his longtime partner, Meghan.

With all that has been going on it is very difficult to say, or even try to say where he is going to end up. He has worked incredibly hard to get where he is today and will continue to chase his dreams and achieve his goals.

If he could give any advice to the young kids wanting to pursue their dreams it would be: "Know what you want, plan how to get it, work hard, and don't be scared to ask people for help",

Now, we leave Jason at the age of 25, he's no longer a little boy with a dream but now a man living his dream. I didn't need to look far to find someone who has and continues to inspire me, sometimes our role models are those living real lives right under our noses.

HIGH SCHOOL CATEGORY FINALIST: LUKAS MAHER

THE BOY WHO NEEDED A HERO

Once upon a time, in the bustling city of Auckland, within a small, safe island called New Zealand, lived a boy of 14 years. The child was no ordinary boy, despite his fervent attempts to be so. What made this boy so, you could say, odd, unusual, irregular, but not quite extraordinary? Well, he was a dancer – a ballet dancer. He absolutely adored ballet: the feeling when he was soaring through space, suspended by the air itself was bliss to him. For a fraction of a second, nothing mattered but him. His body, moulded into beautiful shapes, was his and only his. And in that fraction of a second, all the things he had been told while growing up, like “grass is green,” and “humans can’t fly,” and “boys don’t do ballet” – all of this just dissipated, like fog on a winter’s morning when the sun remembers to show its face. In that moment, even the laws of gravity vanished, time halted, and he was the only person in the world. In fact, without ballet, the boy’s life would have pirouetted out of control. This is why the boy wished to be the best ballet dancer on the planet...but there was just one dilemma: the boy needed a teacher. Although dance meant the world to the boy, educating her son meant all the worlds combined to the boy’s mother. “You must have a fine education so you can become a fine man to help continue a fine society in a fine world,” Mother would comment. “Fine,” the boy thought, as he acknowledged the value of academia.

So, the boy was presently enrolled in a fine school, on the good side of town. However, this school, like the boy, was no ordinary school, and the fees reflected its superiority. Despite this, the boy and his mother were not particularly wealthy (in money – they were in happiness) so, you see, the boy faced a second issue. The answer to the boy’s problems was not, in fact, a question of ‘what’, but indeed ‘who’? The ‘who’ was a man. He had silver hair, sprinkled with traces of black – “salt and pepper,” as the boy’s mother remarked. His outer eyelids were accentuated with narrow creases, and the curving undulations of muscular calves, biceps and triceps suggested prior involvement in strenuous exertions, largely exclusive to athletes. These characteristics provided the man with character, and although he was not particularly eccentric, his disposition was responsible for a certain uniqueness that the boy aspired to emulate. The man seemed approach life saying Today is an opportunity to do good in the world and I endeavour to put that opportunity to good use. Wrapped in sunshine, he emanated a golden, glowing aura which inevitably melded across into anyone who had the good fortune of meeting him.

So, it almost seemed too good to be true when, after multiple private ballet coaching sessions, the man offered the boy financial help, in the form of a dance scholarship to attend the fine school. The boy and his mother were ecstatic – enthusiastic and anxious to begin a terrific academic and artistic journey for the boy. And terrific the journey has become – to this day, the man aids, coaches and nurtures the boy, showing him how to always move downstage in the dance called life and to love the elegant, sophisticated artform of ballet. The boy has grown and thrived significantly under the man’s guidance and regards the man’s teaching skills at high esteem. Both the mother and her son are eternally grateful for all the man has done, from granting the boy his fine scholarship, to simply being such a special gift to them. When the boy bows at his final curtain call, he will always remember the man who helped him discover that ballet is like painting in watercolours, in a world of charcoal greys.

I, the writer, am the boy, and the man is Geordan Wilcox, Head of Dance at Saint Kentigern College (which really is a fine school), and ex-Royal New Zealand Ballet dancer. Once again, my mother and I are extremely indebted to Geordan and grateful for all he has done and is doing, not just for me, but for the profile of dance. We couldn’t have asked for a better, more special person in our lives. I was looking for a male ballet coach, and I found a great person who is my mentor, role-model and inspiration and helps me choreograph my way through life...my hero.

HIGH SCHOOL CATEGORY FINALIST: MAIA ROUT

THE MIKA FAMILY

The Mika family were just like every other family in Papakura going into lockdown last year in April; caring, kind and generous to their family, trying to make it work with the tough times that were happening with COVID-19. Little did they know what was about to come would be devastating and change everything. Their sweet little boy Josiah passed away. At the age of 9, Josiah Mika would suddenly be sent to Auckland's Starship Hospital intensive care unit, where he would spend 2 weeks battling a rare form of epilepsy that had been brought on by a common cold. He was surrounded by his family, but due to COVID-19, there were restrictions with the limit of 10 people. It was hard for his parents especially because Josiah had a big, loving, and supportive family. Josiah was always making friends, asking to bring people home, and asking for sports gear. He also was quite cheeky, mischievous but always was caring and looking out for others. Julia and Jerome said that their son had fought well with his 'bravery and courage' until his unfortunate death on May 16th. The reason I admire the Mika family is that even though they were in dark times and were still trying to adjust to what had happened, they were still fighting strong because they knew that Josiah would have wanted them to.

When Josiah had passed Julia and Jerome decided to create a foundation that would be able to allow sports and recreational activities as well as fun innovative learning opportunities so that it can help playful, nurturing, and developing curious minds, also giving them a sense of belonging, self-confidence, positive self-esteem and broader wellbeing of children and young people. Which would be things that Josiah would have loved to do. By now you are probably thinking 'wow Josiah sounds like a sweet young boy' which you are correct he was, he was always looking out for others and his loving family and trying to bring others home because that was the type of kid he was. I personally think that we need more people like Josiah in the world, even though I have never met him or his family I can tell that they were loving and kind parents to Josiah, which explains where he gets his kindness from. I believe that wherever Josiah is there will always be happiness because that was the type of child he was, and to think that he was so young and yet so smart amazes me. I think the reason why I admire Josiah's Parents so much is that even though it would have been hard for them, both of Josiah's parents especially his mum said herself that it was hard for her to comprehend what had just happened to them and that even though there was a dark cloud they would still find the sun because they knew that is what Josiah would have wanted.

Another reason why I admire them is that they show such courage and I couldn't imagine what they would have gone through. I think that if I were ever to be put in that certain type of situation I honestly don't think I would be able to cope as well as Julia and Jerome did, when I think about it I realize how thankful I am about this not happening to myself, my family, my friends, my classmates, and any other people I know. I guess it is fair to say that if this ever happened to you, you would probably want a magic lamp to make a wish that this would have never happened if this ever did end up happening to you. That probably goes without saying really. But the possibility of it happening is slim to none because it only happens to one in a million children but it still can happen affecting healthy children. As I start to finish this I was thinking that I would like to ask if the \$1000 dollars that go to the school could go to the Rise+Shine foundation for Josiah, but the books can still go to the school. I would like to thank you for reading this article and I hope that if I don't get it that someone else does and that they enjoy this because I enjoyed writing this and was able to 'open my eyes' to see the community and all of its beauty.

I will leave a link <https://givealittle.co.nz/org/riseshine-josiah-mika-foundation>

HIGH SCHOOL CATEGORY FINALIST: SOPHIE ZAADSTRA

A ONCE IN A LIFETIME KIND OF PERSON

My Howick College dean, Mrs Petkovic is quite honestly my favourite person. She is the most compassionate, kind and hardworking person who works daily and without recognition to encourage and support every one of her students to be the best versions of themselves. She maintains a genuine level of care for every student that passes under her guidance or who comes to her in crisis. I greatly appreciate the time and effort she puts in to learn about every students' personality, background, skills, and family. I truly think that she may know more about me, and who I am, than some of my closest friends do. And that's because she cares. Mrs Petkovic is undeniably a huge role model in my life because she has inspired me to be a better person. Before I met her, I was shy and unexceptional and since I've crossed her path, I am proud to say that I have an elevated self-belief and newfound confidence that will support me for the rest of my life as a foundation for what's to come. When I look around at my peers, I am disheartened by the negative influences that they face. The teenage years are such a crucial part of life in general as it's our most vulnerable time where we are so susceptible to the influences that surround us. Fortunately, Mrs Petkovic has given me the confidence and strength to think for myself, follow my own path and be the person that I want to be instead of the person society expects me to be. Her encouraging, and frankly inspiring guidance has allowed me to find credence in myself, my abilities, and my attributes so that I can flourish into the finest version of myself.

What particularly motivates and inspires me about Mrs Petkovic is how far she has come to be where she is today, and all the hardships that she has had to endure over that time. Mrs Petkovic grew up in war-torn Montenegro and then had the courage and strength to move to New Zealand on the other side of the world. She moved here with little knowledge of what was to come and now she's a person who makes considerable contributions to our community - her community. She has helped hundreds of kids into universities, jobs, and higher education whilst providing an enriched environment for mental and emotional growth. I am astounded by how wholeheartedly she has immersed herself in the New Zealand culture, language, and community. I was blessed to have her as my French teacher in year 9, and I'm not exaggerating when I say that she knows more English than I do. I distinctly remember her asking us what the English word was for something, and the entire class was unable to help. Once she figured out the word, not one of us had ever heard it before. I know that a lot of people dream about moving across the world to some exotic place to live a new life but few of us have the courage to do so. However, knowing that Mrs Petkovic was able to do this so well, gives me the confidence to consider it myself.

One of the things I appreciate most about Mrs Petkovic is the way that she isn't just another distant, superior figure in the lives of her students. Instead, she is a sympathetic and approachable person who is not afraid to share personal experiences and thoughts with her students to make them feel comfortable. She has allowed me to be relentlessly curious in the pursuit of knowledge and therefore to always be learning and constantly growing as a person. I respect that she is always willing to listen to different perspectives and evolve in our ever-changing, diverse community. Every day I am continued to be amazed by her intellect, innovation, and ability to adapt. Mrs Petkovic has made countless differences in my life and there aren't enough words to express my gratitude for the amount of time, effort, attention, and love she has given to me. I really want her to know that she is making a real positive impact on the lives of so many who have passed through her care. She has given me a new lease on life and has believed in me so much that now I believe in me too. I truly hope that one day, I could be even half the person she is. She is a once-in-a-lifetime kind of person.

AWARD OF RECOGNITION: PRIMARY NICOLE BAO

MY VIOLIN TEACHER

A divine sound rippled through the air. I stood outside the classroom door, listening to the sounds. Every Saturday I hear those sounds. As sharp as a knife, or as mellow as the sunset. Whenever I approach that classroom I hear melodies of violins chorusing together beautifully. And harmonies of every pitch- low, high, or just right. It feels like I'm in a dream everytime I listen to it. When the music stops, I often hear a voice. That voice belongs to Ruth. My violin teacher.

Ruth has short white hair and often wears a cardigan. And always has a smile on her face. It fits with how she plays the violin. Bright and jolly.

Even through the hard times of Ruth's life she has never stopped teaching. Whenever I look at Ruth I see the passion and determination burning in her eyes. A flame small as a candle, yet greater than a wildfire.

Because of Ruth's effort, I feel as if more children enroll into music classes where we learn the beauty of violin. I love music and feel so thankful to Ruth as she has brought this gift down to me and is contributing to the community, so more kids can learn the art of music, improve on themselves and then become amazing people.

"Come on Nicole! You're going to be late!" Pulled out of my reverie I grabbed my violin and music books, and headed out. To that classroom's door. To my teacher. Ruth.

AWARD OF RECOGNITION: INTERMEDIATE ETHAN WOOD

THE INSPIRING ONE

Communities need leaders, people in the community who are skilled enough to put themselves out there, and my Granddad is one of them for his beachside community in Waihi Beach. He believes that those who have leadership ability need to step up and make their communities better. The locals joke that he is the Town Mayor because he has the vision and skills to accomplish anything.

My Granddad has been tirelessly working (even though aged 74) to make life better for the community of people who live at Waihi Beach. Here are just a few things that he has founded and contributed to:

- Granddad was worried about retired men’s mental health, so he was the founding member of the Waihi Beach Men’s Shed, which is about to be built. The purpose is to bring people together, communicate and do things for the community using their building and fixing skills. It’s an outlet for retired people looking for a purpose and a way to stay connected.
- He got a new medical centre approved by the council using their land and working through the building design.
- As the Chairman of Waihi Beach Residents and Ratepayers Association, he liaised with the council and community for a \$2.8 million library and community hub.
- Growing vegetables in his garden to supply the local bakery in return for coffee and food.
- He founded Focus Group, whose purpose is to create an open place for Seniors to get together and talk through issues that affect them. At their monthly meetings, guest speakers have talked about issues like heart health and retirement.
- He cuts fallen trees from around Waihi Beach into firewood and gives them to the local Marae.

My Granddad lives by a set of rules that he follows every day and encourages others to do so as well. They include showing respect to others, accomplishing things through teamwork and most importantly think outside of yourself. Whenever he sees someone in need of a boost, he will help them and make them stronger.

My Granddad loves to meet new people and always approaches them with a smile and asks them a simple question. With his friendly smile, it would be hard not to become his friend. He believes to be a leader, you need to encourage those around you and be optimistic about what you are doing or trying to accomplish.

I feel so lucky to be his grandson. He gives me his time teaching me how to make or fix things. He has shown me how to be the best leader I can be and has inspired me to be like him when I’m older. To make your community better, show people how to do things, and never once stray from being happy. That’s who I want to be.

My Granddad is a wonderful person who contributes his time and efforts to making Waihi Beach a better place for everyone who lives or visits.

PRIMARY CATEGORY WINNER: ROSA SWANN

AMBER CLYDE

Amber Clyde is a skateboarding teacher who motivates girls to skate. The reason she started teaching girls to skate was because when she was younger she got bullied by older boys, who shouted out "Girls can't skate!"

These words stopped Amber from skating for a while. But as she got older she decided to start a school called 'Girls Skate NZ'. Only a few girls came at first, but then, when they saw one another, more started to join. Now it seems like there's over one hundred! Amber teaches at Waterview, Valonia and Birkenhead skateparks throughout the week.

Amber is a lovely, caring teacher who makes me feel happy and confident. She can make anyone feel good about themselves even if they're not a girl. Her small skate crew began three years ago and is getting bigger and bigger. Amber hopes to get more girls to skate and wants to help them try out tricks they can't do yet.

She also organises skate tours. These are when she takes about seven to ten girls to three different skateparks in the holidays. Some can be far away or close by like Orewa, Barry Curtis or Nixon skateparks.

Amber is special to me as she has given me confidence and fun skills to share with my friends and family. I can now do a backside disaster, an axle stall and most importantly, a drop-in! Thank you Amber for sharing your knowledge and encouragement to us all.

INTERMEDIATE CATEGORY WINNER: LUCY MARTIN

THE ROCK UNDER THE POHUTUKAWA TREE

Everytime I go up to the beach house, I see you. I see your name, engraved on the rock, underneath the big Pohutukawa tree. I miss you, but I never knew you. Everytime I go to your rock, I replace the broken flowers in the glass vase. I walk along the hill by the stream, taking white, purple and yellow flowers carefully off the bushes. Freshly picked from Omamari, just for you. I arrange the flowers, moving them into a pattern. Engraved on the rock beside the vase reads "Roger, a beloved husband, Father, son, poppa, friend and loved by all." My heart always stops at the word poppa. I never met you face to face, but I love you just as much as if you were still here.

You built me a home, right next to the Omamari sea. With your bare hands. Photos of you are glued to the fridge door. My favorite one is the one that was taken when you caught that kingfish, it was almost bigger than you. Everytime we talk about you I always break down crying. I really wish I had time with you, before you passed away. My dad is still devastated, but he continues to talk about you. He tells me stories, he shows me pictures. Glistening tears run down my red cheeks. Even though I never saw anything you did, you are still my hero. You built your family a home, you battled cancer. I want to know everything that you knew.

I am going up to the beach house this holiday. I can't wait to feel the sand between my toes, the waves washing over my feet and most importantly, to replace the broken flowers in the glass vase. I can't wait to see the rock under the big pohutukawa tree with your name on it forever. I am so excited to go fishing in the same spot that you did when you caught that kingfish, or as you would say "Can't wait to catch that kingy!". Because I want to do everything that you did. Everything that you did was amazing. I can't wait to roast marshmallows in the fireplace because it's named Rodger's chimney. My dad says he sees you in me. That makes me proud. You were brave, you were a leader. You inspire me to do everything I do everyday. When I am playing netball, and I am holding the ball under the net, you make me score the goal. When I am doing a test and I am working out an answer, you make me get the answer correct. People say you were a great man. They say you were kind and caring. I hope I will be just like you. You are more than just a poppa to me. You inspire me to do what I love.

HIGH SCHOOL CATEGORY WINNER: DIVYA KARIPPAIL

PARUL JUNEJA

The first time I saw her dance I was sitting backstage, frantically reading over the lines of my upcoming speech. I heard the music start, music I had heard a thousand times, music that I dismissed until I heard the bells. They were unlike the delicate tinkling bells that graced the ankles of the previous dancers, instead they were deafeningly loud, drowning out the music. Curiosity overwhelmed the stress of my impending speech, so I crawled towards the slit in the curtains and looked at the person on the stage. She was dancing up a storm; feet moving like lightning and sounding like thunder on the stage. Her skirt swirled out around her with every spin, demanding the attention of the audience, mesmerising the children and grandparents alike who had gathered on the street to watch her. I assume that the expression on my own face mirrored those of the enthralled audience, as more and more people came to see her dance. The music rose to a frenzied crescendo and her glossy braid whipped through the air until it seemed to leave sparks of fire in its wake. All too soon, the dance was over and she stopped, head held high and eyes blazing, as the sun dipped below the horizon, illuminating the jewellery that adorned her. It was then that I saw her face; oceans of emotion and fiery passion were visible despite her heavy makeup. It was glaringly obvious that her motivation was deep and profound, to an extent that was beyond my understanding. I scrambled up to my feet and prepared to go on stage, nerves extinguished by the beauty of her performance.

The second time I saw her, I was backstage at another show. There was the usual flurry and chaos; the air was thick with face powder and glitter, and I could count at least six different dialects being whispered vehemently back and forth. Distantly, I registered the familiar rising notes of the sitar, indicating that the performance was coming to a close. We were nowhere near ready; there were missing belts and four crying girls, to say at the least. She appeared from across the corner, looking both furious and determined. She gave out a set of orders that I barely comprehended yet rushed to carry out. In under a minute, the girls were smiling and ready, all with belts and flawless makeup. I shepherded them onto stage and breathed a sigh of relief. When she flashed me a smile and ducked through the curtains to join her students on stage, I recognised her as the person I watched dance months ago. Despite the tense set of her shoulders and the worry that lined her face, she walked onto the stage as if she had done so a thousand times and called out the beats for her students. She didn't dance at all that night, but it was obvious that the performance was hers.

After the show I went through the expected motions and spoke the expected words as if I was on autopilot, limbs leaden with exhaustion and eyes struggling to stay open. She came around the corner and offered her thanks, and I complimented her on her performance months ago. It was then that she told me about the years of pain she had suffered and the uncertainty and sorrows she had battled through to perform on stage the way she did. Now that I knew her story I could see it in her dancing; every movement seemed to be infused with the gratitude, humility and passion that had seen her through the hardships that were cruelly thrust upon her. She was nothing short of an inspiration. She carries herself in a way that makes her seem isolated from the rest of us. Some may misinterpret it as arrogance or disinterest but in reality she is simply sure of herself, in a way that nobody ever seems to be. We walk around dazed and confused, as if we are in a fog, second guessing every choice we make and forever wondering if we are doing the right thing. We wonder if we are making the right decisions or are in the right position. She doesn't. She knows exactly who and what her purpose in life is; the certainty with which she conducts herself is enrapturing, and it is only made all the more wonderful for knowing her story. Parul Juneja is someone I look upto in my community.

THANK YOU TO ALL THE ENTRANTS

ACG Parnell College	Green Meadows Intermediate	Murrays Bay Intermediate	Saint Peters College
Ararimu School	Halsey Drive School	New Lynn Primary	Sandspit Road School
Ardmore School	Hauraki Plains College	Newmarket Primary	Snells Beach Primary
Auckland Girls Grammar	Havelock North High School	Ngaruawahia High School	South Auckland S D A School
Auckland Home Educators	Hay Park Primary	Ngatea Primary	St Cuthbert's Primary
Auckland International College	Hingaia Peninsula School	Northcote College	St Cuthbert's College
Auckland Normal Intermediate	Hobsonville Point Primary	Northcote Intermediate	St Mary's School
Avondale College	Holy Cross Catholic School	Northcross Intermediate	St Mary's College
Avondale Intermediate	Holy Cross School	Onehunga Primary	Stonefields School
Balmoral S D A School	Homeschooled Children	Oranga School	Taipā Area School
Baradene College	Howick College	Oratia District School	Takapuna Normal Intermediate
Bayswater School	Howick Intermediate	Orewa Beach School	Takapuna Primary
Belmont Intermediate	Huanui College	Oraitī School	Tauranga Boys College
Berkley Normal Middle School	Hunua School	Palmerston North Girls High School	Te Aho O Te Kura Pounamu
Blockhouse Bay Intermediate	Kamo Intermediate	Papakura Central School	Te Kapehu Whetu
Bombay School	Kaurilands School	Papakura Normal School	The Gardens School
Bucklands Beach Intermediate	Kerikeri High School	Papatoetoe Central School	Titirangi Rudolf Steiner School
Cambridge Middle School	Kerikeri Primary	Pasadena Intermediate	Vauxhall Primary
Campbells Bay School	King's College	Peninsula Primary	Victoria Avenue School
Campion College	Kristin School	Point Chevalier Primary	Wairau Intermediate
Carmel College	Leabank Primary	Pokeno School	Waitakere Primary
Chilton St James School	Liston College	Poukawa School	Wakatipu High School
Conifer Grove School	Long Bay Primary	Pukekohe High School	Warkworth School
Cornwall Park District School	Macleans College	Puketaha School	Western Heights Primary
Dairy Flat School	Macleans Primary	Putaruru College	Western Springs College
David Street School	Mahurangi College	Queen's High School	Westlake Girls High School
Edendale Primary	Manurewa South School	Rangitoto College	Willow Park School
Elim Christian College	Marist Primary	Remuera Intermediate	
Epsom Normal Primary	Massey High School	Riverina School	
Excellere college	Matarau School	Rosehill College	
Freyberg Community School	Maungatapu Primary School	Rosehill Intermediate	
Glamorgan School	Mayfield Primary	Sacred Heart College	
Glenbrook School	Meadowbank School	Saint Josephs School	
Glendowie College	Milford School	Saint Kentigern's Boys School	
Green Bay High School	Mission Heights Junior College	Saint Kentigern's College	
Green Bay School	Moanataiari School	Saint Kentigern's Girls School	
	Mt Albert Primary		

INFORMATION

We received an astounding total of **781 entries** from **136 different schools** around the country.

It was a difficult decision to choose the finalists from all of the excellent entries we received. Due to this we added two extra Awards of Recognition.

We will be in touch with the winners once lockdown has been lifted, to attend your school and award the prizes.

We will be running another Young Authors Challenge in 2022 in line with the **Auckland Writers Festival 2022**.

Thank you to everyone for all your hard work and effort towards the 2021 Young Authors Challenge. We have really enjoyed reading all your stories.

Thank you on behalf of **Barfoot & Thompson**.

