

Lesieli and Tāne

Paying it forward

As the saying goes, “gifts aren’t meant to be paid back, they’re to be paid forward”, and two local young people are doing just that! New staff members at the Graeme Dingle Foundation Marlborough in 2022, Lesieli Taufa and Tāne Anderson know first-hand what it is like to benefit from the programmes the Foundation delivers - and are happy to be ‘paying it forward’.

Lesieli has become a Kiwi Can Leader, helping primary school-aged children learn about respect, resilience, positive relationships and integrity through energy-packed weekly lessons. But she’s not entirely new to the programme, having been on the receiving end of the lessons when she was back at Redwoodtown School as a pupil!

Lesieli recalls “my Kiwi Can Leaders taught me life skills through games. I didn’t even know at the time how much I was learning. It was a fun environment, where you felt safe to open up to others. Kiwi Can was one of the highlights of the week!”

“I saw it make a difference, for example to student wellbeing, and it helped us grow and evolve for the better. Now I’ve got the chance, I want to do that for others,” she says.

Lesieli continued her relationship with the Foundation in her senior years at Marlborough Girls’ College, volunteering as a Peer Mentor in their Stars programme. Lesieli was trained up to become a mentor, working with a Whānau (or Form) Class of Year 9s new to the college. “As well as helping the Year 9s, we got a lot out of it too. The leadership training was really good. I learned to confidently stand up in front of classes and teachers, and deliver lessons that we helped develop ourselves. It’s turned out to be a good stepping stone for being a Kiwi Can Leader”.

Meanwhile Tāne’s journey to Kiwi Can Leader took a different path. A born and bred Blenheim boy, he went to school at Tua Marina

School and Marlborough Boys’ College. “Tua Marina started with Kiwi Can after I’d left – so I missed out a bit there,” he says. But in Year 12 at college, he joined the Foundation’s Career Navigator programme, designed to help senior students figure out what they want to do when they leave college.

“I learned a lot of work-ready skills. For example, the work we did on interview skills was great, it’s meant that when I’ve gone into interview situations in real life it’s no longer so daunting. My mentors, Mark Watson (Robinson Construction) and Chelsea Yates (New Zealand King Salmon) were amazing. I learned a lot about myself, and it cemented my core beliefs.”

Tāne went on to finish Year 13 and then had a year working in viticulture. But when he saw the advertisement for Kiwi Can Leaders, he was lured by the opportunity to make a difference. “After having been involved with the Graeme Dingle Foundation as a student and understanding the positive impact the organisation has, I am excited to have to be a part of the organisation and see each individual grow through the Kiwi Can programme. I have always wanted to contribute to the lives of local tamariki and give them a few opportunities I was given growing up.”

The Graeme Dingle Foundation Marlborough is working with over 3,200 Marlborough young people in 2022. Regional Manager, Kelvin Watt says “we are so delighted to have Lesieli and Tāne join the team. It’s inspiring to have it come full circle now, where former students are inspired to pass it on to the next generation of Marlborough young people!”



We want every child to know: What they have inside is greater than any obstacle.