

# The Bridges Brief

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MP FOR TAURANGA



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## Service with a smile

I often think that one of the most significant roles for a constituency MP is actually symbolic. In Tauranga I am elected by you the people to represent you in Parliament, but I am also elected to represent you in Tauranga as well. When I am at Tauranga events I am, in effect, a symbol of the community I represent.

In practice this means it's important I front up to the community in which I live and represent as much as possible. Part of this service is to provide formal recognition on behalf of everyone in our city of the amazing things people do to make our community function.

Much of this service is performed in my office on Devonport Rd. I look at nominations for JPs, sometimes submitting the names of people who I believe could do this role well. The process is similar when it comes to honours and I write a lot of letters congratulating people for notable things I have heard about. But in order to do all of this properly – in order to know who is really serving in our community – it is essential that I get out and about regularly to schools, businesses, rest homes, bowling clubs, churches, and volunteer organisations.

Tauranga is exceptionally well looked after by large numbers of people who serve the city and its people. They do so, not because they have to, but because they want to. They love our city, they love its people. They serve, in other words, with a smile.



When we think of service we often think of those who do what they do for free. I want to mention a handful of people I have had the pleasure of coming across this month in this category shortly. However, volunteers who give outside of working hours are simply one, albeit a special, subset of people who serve. I believe most people I meet out and about are serving our community as best they can whether in paid employment or not.

Where would we be without the mechanics, the plumbers, the shop owners, the bankers? For starters we wouldn't have cars that go, toilets that flush, newspapers, bread, and milk in the morning, or money to spend. But we also wouldn't have people growing our economy by adding value everyday and paying taxes that ensure we have schools, healthcare and welfare for all who need it in our country.

I also know we wouldn't have people who give freely of their money when they can to help organisations who need financial support. The generosity of kiwis astounds me and the positive accumulative efforts of everyone in Tauranga city to make it the special place it is cannot be underestimated. Service in our community through your job is sometimes undervalued, but exceptionally important.

As I have said, volunteering is also another great way to serve. So here let me offer a handful of examples of service without pay that have touched me – and I hope you – this month. These great people in Tauranga in their own different ways have gone out and done something for others utterly selflessly, offering us lessons in service and generosity.

### **Pete Blackwell**

Pete has been a long serving police officer in our community and, if that wasn't enough, 16 years ago started an annual Police charity lunch and auction. On the first year about 40 people came and \$200 was raised for a good cause. A couple of Friday's ago Pete and his team held the event for the sixteenth time and raised about \$175,000, taking the total raised by the lunches over the years to \$1 million. Tauranga groups that have benefited from the funds raised over time have included Riding for the Disabled, the Omanu Beach Surf Life Saving Club, the Brain Injured Children's Trust, Waipuna Hospice and many more.

### **Ricky Balfour**

Ricky is 13 and I met him for the first time this month at a Chinese Festival concert in Tauranga. Ricky played the violin with aplomb well beyond his years for the audience, but what really touched me was Ricky's story. He often busks on Devonport Rd – you may have seen him there - however, Ricky doesn't busk to finance a new computer or a bike or some new jeans for himself. Ricky's busking funds his sponsorship of a nine year old child in Guatemala.



*Violinist Ricky Balfour in Tauranga this month*

### **Chrissy Jefferson and Dr Liza Schneider**

A few years back Chrissy and Liza identified a need in Tauranga for an Animal Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre. ARRC is volunteer-run and takes care of sick, injured or orphaned native and non native wildlife and nurses them back to good health. When I went to the Centre in rural Tauranga I was lucky enough to see hedgehogs, kingfishers, tuis, kererus, and moreporks. Often there are penguins as well. One story Liza and Chrissy told me of was a friendly penguin found at the Mount who had perhaps hit its head and had suffered neurological damage that meant it had become scared of the sea! Some skilled help got the little penguin back in good health and also back where it belonged.

Chrissy allows land on her home to be used for ARRC and Liza, a veterinarian like Chrissy, gives freely and generously of her time 24/7.



*Morepork 'Al Bundy' at Tauranga's Animal Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre*

## Denise Arnold

Tauranga lawyer Denise wanted to free Cambodians she had seen caught in a poverty-trap and decided that she shouldn't sit back and leave it to others. So in 2008 she set up the Tauranga-based Cambodia Charitable Trust. Since then, and with a lot of work and the help of a great team of volunteers, 41 girls have been sponsored into schooling and eight schools supported in rural Cambodia. Other children have been helped into homes and communities have been assisted from forced land eviction and relocation.

Denise and her Trust's work ensures all money donated by sponsors goes directly to the intended cause, whether that be funding a girl through school, buying books for a school library, or a bike to ensure a child gets to school.

Thank you Pete, Ricky, Chrissy, Liza and Denise for your lessons to us all in service and generosity.

Thank you also to all of you who provide service with a smile. Whether paid or unpaid, it makes our city and our world a better place.



*Children in school thanks to the Cambodia Charitable Trust*

*Simon*

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