



A YOUNG LEADER IN ROTARY

A young woman's perseverance and desire to make a difference in her community, coupled with the support of a proud Rotarian dad and a supportive club, has contributed to two successful projects in Christchurch city.



Simone Mackenzie was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Christchurch Sunrise, NZ, to the District 9970 RYLA course

held at College House, University of Canterbury, NZ, in January 2015. Simone describes the experience as a unique opportunity to learn leadership in a supportive environment leaving her with a strong desire to get involved in Rotary and make a difference in her community. She was inducted into the Rotary Club of Christchurch Sunrise in March 2015 and began a journey towards helping the Christchurch community.

The Rotary Club of Christchurch Sunrise has just over 50 members, with a strong community connection. Over the years they had carried out a number of projects for the Battered Women's Trust. Simone's dad, John Mackenzie, who was club president in 2015, suggested that she and older sister Monique combine their energies and get involved in a project together.

Enquiries were made with the Battered Women's Trust and from that came the project to refurbish two very tired rooms at one of the transition houses. Monique, an architect, did a lot of the design, while Simone project managed from start to finish; submitted the plan, did a budget, convinced the club to come on board, organised the volunteers and subcontractors and reported to her club and club board throughout the project.

The nature of the project and the sensitivity surrounding transitional and safe houses for women in crisis was such that volunteers and subcontractors had to be scheduled in advance in some detail and Simone or club president John would have to be present when they arrived on site.

The Bishopdale Mens Shed assisted in the construction of a window seat, which was acknowledged with a little plaque indicating their involvement. Likewise, there was a plaque acknowledging the work of Rotary in the refurbishment. This sent

a message to the ladies in crisis that there are many men who understand their pain and are willing to help.

The project gained momentum, resulting in much of the labour and some of the materials coming at no cost or being heavily discounted. At the project's end in June 2017 about \$30,000 worth of work was carried out at a cost of only \$10,000.

The project gave Simone, a geologist, very valuable project management experience and developed her self-confidence.

Then District 9970 governor Arie Geerlofs recognised the project and Simone's involvement with a presentation of a Club Members Award to her at his district governor changeover in July 2017.

As part of the rebuild of Christchurch, Otakoro – an organisation created to take over one of the functions of the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) – was charged with delivering projects to increase the vibrancy of the inner city that would help bring communities back into the city. A plan to construct a butterfly house and adjacent pizza oven emerged, with an opening ceremony scheduled in four weeks' time.

The Rotary Club of Christchurch Sunrise was approached and took on the project, once again under the project management of Simone. Simone saw it as an opportunity to involve the dream team that did so well on the Battered Women's Trust transitional house project.

The club had other projects on the go at the time, so an approach was made to the neighbouring Rotary Club of Hornby, which also provided a team. One week was set aside for planning and gathering of materials and the construction occurred over three successive weekends. The project wasn't without its challenges; one being the shape of the butterfly house, a second being the metal plates and fasteners contemplated timber milled in a gauge that occurred in the US, not New Zealand. Those issues



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were overcome, and the project was delivered on time. The two Rotary clubs worked well together and formed a strong bond. Since completion three months ago, the two clubs have held a joint meeting, where they were able to celebrate the completed project.

Simone has recently featured on the promotional video for the Australia/New Zealand conference to be held in Christchurch in September 2019. She has been drawn into the organisation of the conference to help with newsletters.

In 2019, Rotary International will be celebrating the 1989 decision by the Council of Legislation to permit the admission of women into Rotary clubs. Since then there have been many great women in Rotary and there will continue to be more. Increasingly, younger women are looking to Rotary to assist them in their desire to make a difference in their own and the international community. Simone is one of these young women, with a bright future in Rotary. •