

Eulogy for Geoff Skinner

As read by Tumuaki Janine Harrington at the funeral on Friday, May 17, 2024.

Tēnā koutou katoa. My name is Janine Harrington, or, as Geoff sometimes referred to me, Principal Harrington. I've been working at Halswell Residential College for over a decade, but Geoff's commitment to the college spans three times that.

Geoff told me he didn't particularly like my office because he spent too much time in the headmaster's office at primary school. Maybe that is why he loved working with the complex and challenging students at HRC.

Geoff started at HRC, or, as it was known at the time, Hogben School, so long ago that we can't even find the exact date, but we think it was in 1989. He finished up around 2003. He was a residential social worker on a small team, managing up to 22 students. It wasn't a job for the faint-hearted.

After he resigned, Geoff became a volunteer student advocate, with independent ears and eyes overseeing and supporting our special needs students. He was in that role until 2022.

When I asked several staff what they remember about him, some noted his heart-stopping driving. Others his passion for music, introducing them to new styles and bands. All remember how much the students LOVED him.

Geoff was a master at building relationships, and that's what's needed to connect with our kids. I have no doubt his genuine interest, warm humour, humble presence, and deep sense of calm and compassion are why they loved him.

I spoke to a former student who now works at HRC. He remembers Geoff as a 'good sort', with an unwavering, positive outlook who you could have a laugh with. And his playing the guitar on the big red bus (delegated to playing because it was better than his driving).



I will remember Geoff as HRC's ultimate cheerleader, our most fervent supporter, and the number one fan of our school. In his role as advocate, he needed to be interviewed by external auditors, such as ERO. He spoke highly of the staff and our programmes. Geoff told them that the students at HRC were some of the luckiest in the world.

Geoff was a beacon of encouragement, uplifting others with his words and deeds of support. During my son's battle with cancer,

wristbands were introduced, and of all those who wore them, including my family, Geoff wore his for the longest time, a very very long way into Jake's remission. I suspect he was Jake's number one fan.

I am grateful that Geoff took it upon himself to draw my attention to relevant articles in The Press and The Star. In addition, he offered insightful commentary and humour. I particularly enjoyed his text when one arrogant principal found themselves in a scathing story on the front page of The Press. He aptly pointed out: "Yesterday's peacock is today's duster."

He would also text me when he read a relevant death notice in the paper. Upon reading his, I was surprised to learn he was 79; he was young at heart and youthful in spirit. Geoff wrote his own notice, and I do wish he had included the sentence he was pondering, that being, 'Geoff has left his living after a short battle with a mountain lion...'

Psychologist, author, and guru, Ram Dass, once said, "We are all just walking each other home," with 'home' symbolising the place beyond this life.

Geoff and Gill, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for allowing me to take a few steps on that walk home beside Geoff. Thank you for graciously permitting me to witness the beautiful way you navigated this chapter of your lives together. Your deep love and connection have left me in awe. Gill, you said it was a privilege to care for

Geoff, and the way you did that and kept us up to date with messages, and gave out hugs despite your own pain and exhaustion, was inspirational and moved me deeply.

I appreciated being invited to sit and chat with you both as we watched the birds washing themselves in the terracotta dish on your deck, the city vista stretching out beyond.

Our conversations ranged from serious discussions about assisted dying to light-hearted plans about silencing the neighbour's yappy dogs without getting caught. Humour seamlessly coexisted with depth until the end, a testament to the remarkable

atmosphere at your home where both laughter and contemplation find their place.

In closing, when Geoff resigned from his role as student advocate, he told me that over the years he had gained more from the students than they had gained from him.

His statement underscores his exceptional character, humility, and empathy, and it highlights the transformative power of genuine human connections and the profound impact of such interactions.

Thank you, Geoff, for your rich and enduring legacy of service and dedication to HRC, both as a valued

staff member and as a committed volunteer. Thanks for the yarns, the laughs, and the wisdom you shared with us and with the students.

Thank you for the lives you changed for the better.

Sadly, HRC is poorer now that our number one fan has reluctantly packed up his guitar and gone home.

Janine Harrington, Tumuaki

Kua hinga te tōtara o Te Waonui a Tāne.

The tōtara in the great forest of Tāne has fallen.

Solar storm over HRC, May 11, 2024

Photo by Simon Gannaway





Te Whare a Owaka

Whare a Owaka began the term with a few changes as we bid farewell and welcomed in new kaiako.

Despite these changes, kaiako and ākonga navigated together, building on whanaungatanga (relationships) and manawa-roa (resilience).

Priscilla continued to be culturally responsive in Te Ao Māori as she engaged daily in karakia, waiata, and pepeha. Her excitement was highlighted when she experienced her first marae visit to Taumutu Marae, where she experienced ways of knowing, ways of being, and ways of doing through engaging in activities and putting into practice what she had learned in Owaka.

These and many of our school values helped support Priscilla's transition back home to her community and new school, as kaiako focused on building Priscilla's social-relationship skills, self-awareness, coping strategies, responsible decision-making, and biking.

Priscilla reinforced these learnings through engaging in a multitude of after-school curriculum activities, interschool sports days, outings, and community events.

As one door closes, another door opens. We acknowledge Priscilla's strength, courage, resilience, and friendship over the past year as an active Owaka ākonga and wish her all the best on her new journey.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi,
engari he toa takitini.

Success is not the work of one,
But the work of many.





Te Whare a Makonui

Term 2 is coming to a close, and for all of us working in Whare Makonui, there have been many highlights of learning and personal growth.

Alex, who is leaving us at the end of the term, has completed his remaining goals to receive his red, blue, brown, and black wristbands, which speak of his resilience and determination. This is a huge achievement. He has earned our House Champion award and been voted Student of the Week numerous times in our whare due to his helpfulness and positive role modelling. Alex has established an independent self-care routine and takes pride in his appearance. He has shown his resilience in developing and maintaining positive friendships with his peers, and he said recently that he has learnt strategies to avoid getting angry super-fast, like listening to music to calm himself.

Jake, who is also finishing up at the end of the term, has shown growth by challenging himself in recent weeks to join the other boys on the biking trips. He managed to complete the ride with the group, which he was pleased about. Jake has recently been building a complex paper model dog as he continues to focus on creative projects.

A recent focus for Theo has been on cyberbullying, internet safety, interacting with strangers, and the appropriate use of cell phones and apps. Theo has been learning about boundaries, trust, and the potential pitfalls of technology. Kaiako and whānau continue to support Theo through this learning as he develops in maturity and understanding.

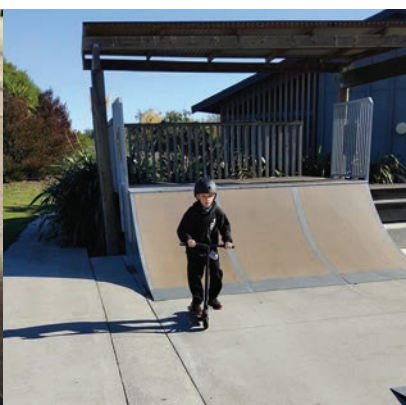
Ryder has made tremendous progress transitioning into Makonui this term.

It has been a steady process of learning to live among others, attend school for full days, and stay overnight. Ryder has been developing his social skills and showing more consideration for others and how his actions affect them. Ryder is a big fan of Lily the HRC cat, as well as the dogs (namely Larny) that come in with various kaiako for a visit.

We wish Alex and Jake all the best as they continue their education journey.

Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou
ka ora ai te iwi.

With your food basket and
my food basket, the people
will thrive.



Te Whare a Huritini

As we get ready to farewell Term 2, we celebrate the positive changes that have occurred during the term.

Ākonga forged on with developing their independence by completing life skills tasks and exploring the community to improve social-emotional skills. Ākonga completed morning routines independently, for example: bed-making, changing sheets, tidying rooms, breakfast chores, and brushing their teeth.

Ākonga regularly visited Tūranga and Te Hāpua libraries to practice social-emotional learning. They sought assistance in finding books, maintained eye contact, waited for their turn to talk, actively listened, and exhibited awareness of others by being quiet in a public space. Ākonga strengthened these skills by exploring the community and going on expeditions to popular card trading stores such as Card Merchant, TCG Collector NZ, Appleby Games, and EB Games. At Card Merchant and TCG Collector NZ, ākonga used their Pokémon cards to battle with members of the public. Through these experiences, ākonga displayed perseverance and thrived through individual effort and self-reliance which we are all proud of.

Manuia le malologa. Have a good break.



Te Whare a Tauawa

Tēnā koutou e ngā whānau,
e ngā whānau hou hoki.

Mihi atu nei matau,
ngā kaiako, ki a koutou.

Noho ora mai i roto
I o koutou kainga mahanga.

After many years of amazing mahi, we said haere rā to Matua George. George has been working in Tauawa with kaiako and tamariki for over 14 years. It was a sad goodbye, but we are whakawhetai (grateful) that he still comes in as a residential reliever.

This term, our ākonga went on a noho at the marae in Taumutu for two nights. They got to experience a pōwhiri, go eeling and fishing, have a campfire, and explore the surrounding area of the marae as they also learnt the history of the marae and Taumutu.

As the term comes to an end, we are excited to celebrate Matariki with a hāngī in which our ākonga get to be part of the whole process, from prepping the vegetables and laying down the hāngī, to bringing it up and getting it ready for the whole kura and special guests to enjoy together.

Kia ora e hoa to new kaiako and our new tama, Giles. Giles fits in well with the other and brings a good sense of humour and music-making abilities to Tauawa.



Raumata

Ākonga voice

Luan

HRC Values

Be Resilient: I have learned that wearing a cooking dress (apron) is actually okay.

Build Relationships: I am learning that I can have friendships with different people.

Reflect: I am proud of doing my PLP (Personal Learning Programme).



I am now reading in my head rather than to someone. I found it hard, but I am getting better at it. During PLP, I have mostly been writing about Lee and Nicole crashing cars. I am now using more interesting words and more punctuation. I have enjoyed coming up with new crazy ways they've been crashing and what's happened to them. I have been learning how to read an analogue clock; this is something I couldn't do before. I remember lots of random facts from topic, like how Samuel Parnell helped people get better working conditions. This is why we have a Labour Day holiday.

I have enjoyed having better friendships in class. I am getting along better with my classmates and kaiako. This means it's a lot more fun.

Ākonga voice

James

HRC Values

Be Resilient: I have gotten better at doing my school work and what class kaiako have asked me to do.

Build Relationships: I think my friendship skills have grown and I get along better with people in class.

Reflect: I am proud of joining in on more activities.



We have been listening to an audiobook of Wonder. I enjoy it. I have been learning spelling words and writing sentences.

In maths, I have been counting around the clock in five minutes intervals. I'm getting pretty good at telling the time.

In topic, I learned that New Zealand was the first country to give votes to women. That's awesome!

I have enjoyed getting along with my classmates and having a laugh in class.

Ākonga voice

Jayden

HRC Values

Be Resilient: I have got better at staying in class and managing myself when I get frustrated.

Build Relationships: I am beginning to join in team games in fitness.

Reflect: I am proud of going to technology and enjoying it.



I have been reading about different topics and answering questions. I like being able to pick what I am reading about. I have been writing sentences on Book Creator, and I am starting to use punctuation.

I am getting pretty good at reading an analogue clock now.

In topic, I have learned that protests can bring about change.

I have enjoyed maths and learning about clocks.

Teacher: Nicole Todd
Teacher Assistant: Lee Tacon

We Build Relationships



Te Puna Wai

We know that our mental health is really important to our wellbeing, so we have been looking at ways to stay mentally healthy. Exercise, food and nutrition, hobbies, reading, and being active are different ways the ākonga identified to support their mental wellbeing.

We are lucky to be able to include all of these aspects into our classroom programme through weekly swimming and sports, food technology, science experiments, daily brain challenges, reading and being read to, and

learning about new topics and ideas, so that we have more information to draw from when moving through our day-to-day lives.

History is important to know about and learn from. We have looked at some of New Zealand's history and focused on people who have fought for what they believe in. We have studied the Rainbow Warrior, Springbok Tour, and Parihaka. It was interesting to learn about new ideas like apartheid, nuclear bombs, spies, and peaceful resistance.

ability to self-regulate. Alex has worked hard in class and was named Student of the Week over five times this term for his dedication to schoolwork and making good choices. Ka pai, Alex, and we wish you all the best for your transition.

Ka Rawe Te Wai Paunamu.

Teacher: **Adam Gardiner**
Teacher Assistant: **Cassidy Robb**



Our maths focus has been reading time and interpreting timetables. Ākonga have been learning to count up in intervals of five, transfer between 12-hour and 24-hour clocks, read analogue time and interpret it to digital time, and look at the timetables of movies, buses, and daily schedules to identify how long tasks will take.

Our celebrations in Te Puna Wai include two ākonga moving up one or more reading levels, and another ākonga placing first in the cross country and road race.

Alex is leaving HRC at the end of the term. He has been a member of our class since the beginning of 2023. It has been great to see his communication skills grow and develop, along with his



Kawatea

Kawatea have had a focus on all things 'five': skip counting in 5s, multiplying by 5s, and dividing by 5s. Every ākonga has gained new strategies to help with this new learning, and practice happens each day. We have also been challenging each other with various maths games. Problem-solving skills are a lifelong skill, and maths games provide a great way to enhance problem solving abilities.

Keeping with the maths theme, as a class, we have been learning about graphs; we can label a graph, plot points on a graph, and read coordinates. Everybody took to this learning super quickly. We are about to learn about compasses as a tool for knowing which direction to take.

We also spend time each day reading, writing, and learning how to spell and use punctuation. Our focus has been on writing creatively. As well as being able to describe a scene, Kawatea ākonga have been learning to incorporate characters into their writing, giving them names, and describing what sort of adventures they might have. All ākonga are using laptops for writing tasks, which is a useful tool to learn how to use. It means writing is quicker, more content is produced, and help is on hand for spelling and punctuation.

Teacher: Sarah Hall

Teacher Assistant: Cindy O'Keefe

Ākonga voice

Priscilla

We are learning about division and times tables. I enjoy doing my writing. I went down to my new school and had a look around, and it was pretty cool.

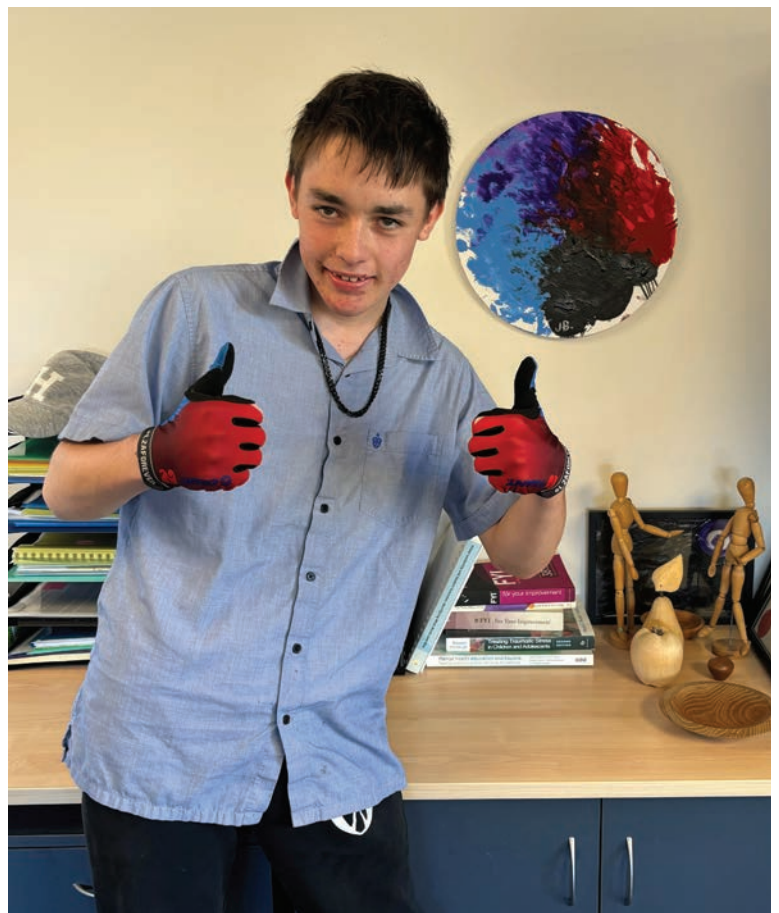
Giles

I learned divided by, and I like this school. It's fun at this school.

Jake

I have been doing paintings on canvas and glass frames. I gave one to Cindy, Sarah, Janine, Steve, and Vicki, and I'm going to give one to my sister for her birthday.

I did a piece of writing that I'm proud of because it was better than all my other bits of writing.



Kaharoa

The Kaharoa classroom focus this term has been on social and emotional learning and trying new activities that push our boundaries.

For our goals in social and emotional learning, we have been practicing being calm, saying hello to someone when entering the classroom, and participating in morning meetings. This helps us with our social skills and gives us an opportunity to practice being kind to other people. This also helps us connect with others.

To practice being calm, we turn the lights out, try to keep still and quiet, listen to our hearts beating, and do some deep breathing exercises. We have purchased a variety of Rubik's Cubes, which we use as fidget tools for those learners who struggle to sit and listen during meetings. This allows our learners to satisfy their sensory needs while listening during morning circle time.

We have introduced a new programme in our class where we start our blocks of learning by doing something physical. The aim of this is to help us learn to regulate our emotions. We start each block in the gym with a variety of activities, such as dodge ball, modified tennis, basketball, football, and parkour. Research shows that being physically active releases endorphins into our bloodstream, which makes us feel more invigorated and assists with a more positive outlook. This new routine has been working well.

This also links to our interoception programme, where we learn to understand the feelings inside our body. We have been continuing with our yoga exercises and have added some static muscular contractions of the triceps, quadriceps, and calf muscles. It makes our muscles hurt and creates a warm sensation afterwards when the blood flows into

that area of muscle tissue. It can be a little competitive as our learners try to hold a particular move for as long as possible.

Our learners are joining in some bigger events that can be anxiety provoking, such as whole kura assemblies, whole kura fitness, and art. Our older learners are participating in work experience in the kitchen and garden.

Teacher: **Andy Dickison**
Teacher Assistant: **Ruth Baker**





Physical Education

Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in my attempt.

The above is the oath of Special Olympics athletes. These words emphasise the importance of effort and trying for one's personal best. This aligns with HRC's purpose: Whakarangatirahia: Be the best you can be.

During Term 1, ākonga were involved in the Special Olympics inter-school Wednesday sport programme.

For the first five weeks, our ākonga went to Dynasty Ballpark, where the Canterbury Softball Association taught the skills of softball as well as playing adapted games. For the last 5 weeks of the term, the Canterbury Cricket Association ran a programme at Hagley Park where the ākonga again learned cricket skills as well as playing adapted games.



Special Olympics Athletics

On April 10, Special Olympics NZ ran an Athletics Certificate Day at Nga Puna Wai. Our ākonga participated in the 100m, 200m, and relay, as well as the field events of long jump, shot put, and adapted javelin.

Canterbury Secondary Schools Cross Country and Road Race

Ākonga competed in both these events. The road race was held in Hagley Park, and the cross country was held at Ascot Park. Ākonga ran extremely well, and we had some amazing results.

Special Olympics Football Tournament

HRC competed in the top grade at the tournament. We played three schools and won two out of three games. The HRC team finished second. This was an amazing achievement, and the best part was that our team worked as a team.



HRC: A Cultural Narrative

A cultural narrative on the history of HRC te Otu Mātua has been completed and is available for viewing on our website.

Mānawatia a Matariki

Both ākonga and kaiako eagerly await the opportunity to celebrate Matariki each year. We use this time as a chance to reflect on the year and remember those who have passed since last Matariki.

This year, we marked the occasion with an impressive performance from our kapa haka group, followed by a hāngī prepared for our kura and special guests by whare Tauawa.

An immense amount of work and planning goes into this special time each year. Ngā mihi nui to those involved who make this possible and give our kura the opportunity to spend time together as we share kai.



Dates for the diary

Board of Trustees Meetings

Friday, August 30, 2024

Friday, October 25, 2024

Term 2 Travel Out Day

Friday, July 5, 2024

Term 3 Travel In Day

Tuesday, July 23, 2024

Term 3 Travel Out Day

Friday, September 27, 2024



RSS-only Enrolments at HRC

Who makes the application?

Applications can only be made by the young person's learning support provider in their home region. This could be a Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour (RTLb), a Ministry specialist, or a day specialist or fund-holder school.

Please contact our student coordinator if you have any questions about the enrolment process, or if you would like to arrange a time to visit.

Anna McCoy, Student Coordinator

03 339 7802 | annamccoy@halswellcollege.com

www.halswellcollege.com