



Rural Youth & Adult Literacy Trust

Literacy Tuition for Rural/Isolated Adults & Teenagers

Newsletter December 2020



Kia Ora Everyone!

2020 has been a year that many people will remember!

Take a minute to recognize that low literacy skills are in themselves a form of lockdown – one that our students have experienced for most of their lives.

Amidst the uncertainty we, at RYALT, have been very fortunate that we were able to continue supporting those in need of help with reading and writing! Because we already work in the 'Cloud' not much had to change.

In a year of chaos and change, we are proud to say we can celebrate a few milestones!

Youth Literacy

Because so many of our adult students say how much they wish that they had received help when they were younger, and talk about

what a nightmare high school was for them, RYALT made the decision to start working with youth in 2017. Initially that help was in the form of school holiday camps only but now we are increasingly being approached by teenagers wanting ongoing help with literacy.

We are often asked, "Why aren't the schools doing it?" The answer is that secondary schools have very dedicated staff running remedial programmes. However they are under-resourced given that low literacy amongst teenagers has increased rapidly since 2009. Schools cannot help as easily with writing as they can with reading, because that needs one-to-one help. The other big problem schools face is that the students wag 'pullout programmes' to avoid getting teased and told they are dumb by their peers.

Youth Catchup Literacy Camps

Due to the first lockdown, the team had to come up with a plan B that saw them turn Youth Literacy Camps due to be held at Port Waikato, into the first virtual literacy camp ever!

Many people volunteered to help with the camp and we thank all of you for the efforts put in to making the Virtual Camp a success. We received donations for phones to give the students. Thank you! These were used as incentives. If the teenagers participated with a good attitude in the camp then at the end of camp we would unlock the phone for them, to keep and to use. It was great to have this extra motivation as what the kids were doing was always going to bring up negative feelings about themselves and their ability to learn.

The virtual camp format was two half hour sessions per day via Zoom on smartphones for the whole two weeks of the school holidays. That was quite a time commitment for our volunteers. Thank you too! Our volunteers worked with such patience, and some of them did get mucked around. We thank them for their graciousness about that, also. We learned a lot about running a virtual camp and plan to do it again in July 2021. This time we won't be taken by surprise and we will be able to do it bigger and better than in 2020.

Our 2nd camp, held during the term three school holidays, was a huge success with excellent feedback from students who not only improved their literacy but

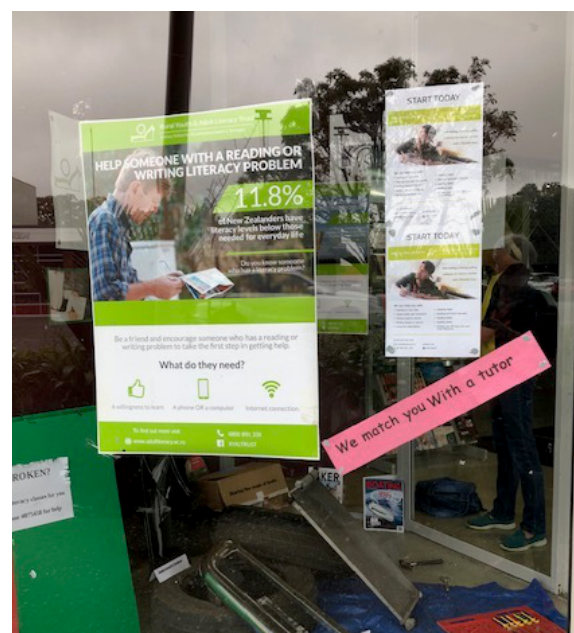
went away with newly formed friendships we are sure will continue in the future! The teenagers attending this camp will be given priority for attending the 2021 camps as we think they got a raw deal in 2020.

A huge shout out goes to our Camp Manager Ngareta Wairepo, 2IC's Jasmine Piacun, Tremayne Thompson and all the amazing volunteers who made this camp such a memorable and impressionable event for our kids! Not only do we want to help improve their reading and writing, but we also want to give them life memories that they can look back on and smile about.

Adult Literacy

The 5 greatest gifts we can give others: our Attention, Kindness, the Gift of Time, the Gift of Not Judging, and the gift of Encouragement.

Heartfelt gratitude to our team of Volunteer Literacy Coaches, without whom we would not be able to support our students up and down the country. It takes



patience, dedication, openness to learning, not to mention knowledge, creativity and all too precious TIME to be a literacy coach.

For adult students it can take an enormous amount of courage to contact us. They may have tried many times during their lives to get help with literacy or this may be their first time. No matter what, they've likely successfully hidden their difficulty, sometimes from even their nearest and dearest.

It's not unusual to hear of people who were carrying our phone number around with them for 1-3 years before plucking up the courage to call.

Some students work with a coach for years and form a lasting friendship. Others disappear off the radar after a few sessions. Lives can be complicated and we work with vulnerable people. Often the people who disappear come back later, knowing what they are committing to and determined to change their life.

We are fortunate to be a part of something that changes lives forever.

Kerikeri Hub: Seok Dawn, Ngaire Allwood and their team of coaches at Kerikeri hub have been working with 12 students (including 2

Trust Board

Again we thank our trustees for the good work they do in ensuring that RYALT has sufficient funding to operate, that it is responsible in spending grants for the purposes for which they are donated, and that the Trust stays on track in terms of its goals and objectives. Thanks to Richard Winch (Chairperson), Barry O'Donnell (Treasurer) and Jo Poland (Secretary) for the important part they play in RYALT.



groups) this year. They have also dressed the local library display window three times this year to publicise the work of RYALT (photos below). This group works tirelessly in promoting RYALT services to the local community and have a particular interest in working with young people trying to cope with apprenticeships.

Hokianga Hub: Thanks to Phyllis and Richard Nahi who continue their good work in the Hokianga area.



Imagine our surprise when we received a phone call from The PROJECT wanting to run a story on RYALT and how we are contributing to the solution in regard to the poor statistics reported by UNICEF - a third of our youth struggling with literacy! They ran a great story showcasing our service and Jas Piacun, who has such an amazing story of how she overcame her struggles with reading and literacy as a young mother. A big thank you to our Community Coordinator, Miriama Ualesi, who managed to organize this great publicity! (A link to the programme is on our website in the News tab.)

Our website is also in the middle of having a new makeover with our Marketing Team Leader Rahul Krishnan overseeing the new and improved additions.

Through these changes, we have had people sign up to become a "Friend of RYALT", contributing weekly to our trust so that we may continue the tremendous work in the wider community nationwide.



Thank You!

So that has been our 2020 Year! We have had such a ride, and we are happy to say that we can end this year on a significantly positive note!

On behalf of RYALT, Jo and her outstanding team, we would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all volunteers and supporters who have made this year a great year despite the challenges.

We wish you all a safe and Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year! We look forward to seeing you all in the New Year, refreshed and ready to face what 2021 brings.