

Media Release

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School-to-work Scholarship winners – 2 years on

In late 2001, Top Energy set up the School-to-work Programme from a grant awarded by Contact Energy, based on electricity savings made by the region's power consumers during the 'power crisis' that winter.

The School-to-work Programme offers Scholarships, which encourage Mid and Far North secondary school students to get paid part-time work experience in their chosen industry, while still at school.

Since the School-to-work Programme's inception, 56 students have enjoyed practical work experience across a whole range of work disciplines and many of them have found permanent work in the region after completing their Scholarships and leaving school.

Two Scholarship winners back in 2001 were Philip Sauer of Kaitaia and Katie Waiti of Kaikohe. Now, some 24 months on, these energetic young adults are both working hard in full-time employment in their respective communities - and getting on with their lives.

Philip Sauer, Apprentice Joiner, Kaitaia:

Philip Sauer is a young man who was awarded a School-to-work Scholarship when he thought he'd like to pursue a cabinetmaking career. The scholarship helped him gain paid work experience with local Kaitaia firm Cabinetworks, while in his sixth form year at Kaitaia College.



After leaving school, Philip secured a joinery apprenticeship position with KPH Construction in Kaitaia, where he now works. Philip is due to complete his apprenticeship in early 2005.

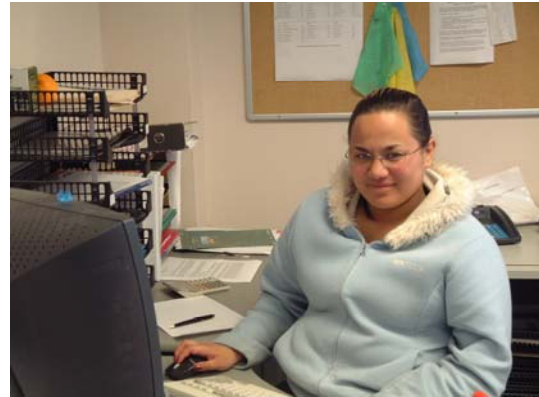
Said, Brian Attwood, Philip's employer, "He's a bright young man and he's doing extremely well in all facets of his work. He's got a great attitude and is a delight to have on our team."

Brian also says Philip's School-to-work Scholarship experience was a factor in his offering Philip the apprenticeship with his firm. "I think it gave him a bit of an idea what this sort of

work is about and the confidence to show us he really wanted the job. It's a great programme in that regard," Brian added.

Katie Waiti, Telesales Operator, Kaikohe:

Katie Waiti is a bright, confident young woman living and working in Kaikohe. At the end of her 6th form year at Northland College, Katie was offered a scholarship to go to Auckland University of Technology, but she decided to stay on at school for her bursary year. While completing her bursary, she was granted a School-to-work Scholarship, which meant she could get paid part-time work experience outside her normal study hours.



Katie says she didn't really have a clear idea of the sort of career she might pursue, but that she did have a keen interest in computers. With the help of School-to-work Programme Co-ordinator, Joe Nol, Katie approached Top Energy's Customer Contact Centre subsidiary, PHONEplus, to see if they could offer her work experience.

Katie landed her part-time job and trained as a telesales operator at PHONEplus, where she now works as a permanent member of staff.

According to PHONEplus manager, Kathryn Starr, "Katie is a bright, cheerful member of our team and she shows a lot of initiative. She is excelling in a business environment that requires good computer and excellent communication skills."

In a more recent development, the School-to-work Programme has also created a positive outcome for students living in the Far North's more remote areas. Previously students looking for part-time work experience, while living in isolated communities, were disadvantaged by their community's geographic isolation - in terms of travelling time and costs, as well as a general absence of employment opportunities available to them. Finding a job after school was therefore virtually impossible.

Despite these obstacles and thanks largely to the vision and dedication of one teacher, Maree Blokker, and School-to-work special school holiday work scholarships (which provided additional travel and accommodation allowances), senior students from two of the region's most isolated schools, Broadwood and Panguru, have found part-time positions over their school holiday breaks.

The School-to-work Programme is one of four Top Energy community sponsorships aimed at supporting the region's junior and secondary school students. Other sponsorships include WaterSafe (to raise the swimming and water survival skills of primary school-aged kids); the Far North Science & Technology Fair (a learning initiative designed to promote an interest in Science & Technology for Years 7 through 13 students) and the Young Entrepreneur Programme (which provides training and mentoring for students and school leavers on how to establish their own businesses).

Senior students interested in applying for a School-to-work Scholarship should talk with their school's Careers Advisor, or contact Top Energy's School-to-work programme Co-ordinator, Joe Nol, on 0-9 401 1052. END.

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