

EDUCATION FEATURE

# widening horizons



## Challenging programmes boost kids' learning potential

**Mangawhai husband and wife team Geoff and Lynne Pearson are helping to change children's attitudes and build their self-esteem with a business that teaches life lessons while providing a healthy dose of fun.**

Their adventure-based learning company, Rockup, was started six years ago, prompted by experiences with their own three children and a desire to improve kids' attitudes and inspire them to reconnect with the outdoors.

"Children have lost the ability to play and be creative in the outdoors. We wanted to change that and change their attitudes towards challenges," says Geoff.

A former New Zealand wrestling representative, Geoff was brought up on a dairy farm and decided to apply his experience in the events, promotional and team-building industries, to educational programmes for all age groups.

More than two years of research went into acquiring the first portable rock wall, which cost \$100,000. The company now has two and visits 200-250 schools a year, offering more than 50 other activities, including archery, shooting, kayaking, rafting, raft and

bivouac building, along with team tasks using a range of inflatables. An element of risk is integral to the learning, says Geoff.

"We decided to use rock walls because most people are afraid to have their feet off the ground and it's a good way to get them to start listening. The perceived fear versus the real fear conflict is taken care of and they have to take responsibility for themselves and their peers"

Geoff says the structured programmes teach children about consequences for actions and combine visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning to make a lasting impression.

"The 'carrot' is the fun and on the way there are all these other messages we're building in."

Both hands-on climb masters, Lynne and Geoff also employ up to 15 trained casual staff and one permanent staff member.

Their programmes are closely linked with various parts of the curriculum, including road safety, in which the climbing harness provides a tangible reminder of the importance of seatbelts.

"A key message is to stay focused



Rockup founder Geoff Pearson, harnessing students and their potential.

on what you're doing, because one mistake can end up killing you or someone else – it's very relevant to teenagers, getting the message about risk-taking behaviours across to a notoriously tough audience."



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The agricultural courses are hands-on, flexible and tailored locally to ensure graduates have the best chance of gaining employment.

## Education providers seal deal

NorthTec has sealed a new education alliance with Taratahi Agricultural Training Centre to provide training for those wanting a start in the agriculture industry and those looking to acquire the skills necessary to assist with their farming endeavours.

Taratahi is the country's oldest and largest provider of vocational agricultural training and has an established residential campus based in Masterton. It offers a range of programmes in the Wairarapa, Taranaki, Hawke's Bay and Rodney.

NorthTec chief executive Paul Binney says the partnership is important in meeting the ongoing and future training needs of the agricultural sector throughout Northland.

Mr Binney says the alliance will help graduates find employment and the contribution they will then make to Northland's economy will be considerable. Taratahi and NorthTec both have the core philosophy of 'real training on real farms'.

Next year, both the Level 3 National Certificate in Farming Skills (Work Ready) and the Certificate in General Farm Skills courses will be offered in Northland. The National Certificate is being offered as a full-time, year-long course aimed at giving those wanting to enter the agricultural industry the knowledge to get them started. Students on the course will get the option of being able to focus on either sheep and cattle or dairy farming.

The General Farm Skills Certificate caters for both those without any previous farm experience and those seeking formal qualifications. It includes an extensive range of course options such as health and safety, forestry and agri-chemicals, ATV use, fencing, relief milking, calf-rearing, animal health, soils and fertilisers tractors and chainsaw use.

The courses will be held on a number of different farms and venues throughout Northland and Taratahi welcomes offers of further farms that can be used as training locations.

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## Women's Centre

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**Yoga One Day Workshop** – Saturday 19th November, 9.30am-3.30pm, \$60  
Enjoy a day of yoga by the sea, vegetarian lunch included.

**Career Planning & Job Search Workshop** – Friday 18th & 25th November, 10am-12pm, FREE  
Learn about training options & how to make effective career decisions.

**Painting One Day Workshop** – Saturday 3rd December, Warkworth, 10am-3pm, \$65  
No experience required, learn the colour wheel, use of tones, contrast and drawing with perspective.  
Elena Nikolaeva' (Moscow University Fine Arts & Design Degree)

**Jewellery Making** – Girls 11-14 years, Saturday 19th November, Warkworth, 10am-3.30pm, \$35  
Learn how to design and build pieces, all materials covered in course cost.

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## EXHIBITIONS & Open Days

### Albany Campus - Jewellery

Exhibition opens Friday 25 Nov, 5.30pm. 14 Mills Ln. OPEN DAYS: 26 - 29 Nov.

### Northart - Senior Graduates Show

Exhibition opens Sunday 27 Nov, 5 - 7pm.

Northart, Ernie Mays St, Northcote. 28 Nov - 11 Dec. 10am - 4pm.

### Puhoi Campus - Art & Craft

Exhibition opens Saturday 3 Dec, 6pm. 4 - 11 Dec. 682 SHI, Puhoi.

OPEN WEEKEND: 10 & 11 Dec 10am - 4pm.

**HUNGRY CREEK** www.hungrycreek.ac.nz  
**ART & CRAFT SCHOOL** 09 4220752 NZQA Reg



Eileen Leahy -Yr4

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Mahurangi Christian School students helped Wendy Sims to create a mosaic. From left, David Wolfenden, Jade Hansen, Solomon Waterhouse, David Lark, Ryan Wech, Sophia Torresan, Renee Adams, Kaleigh Morris, Wendy Sims, Jackson Balzat, Isiah Newey, Liam Chessum.

# Mahurangi

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## Milestone celebration for Mahurangi Christian School

Mahurangi Christian School is celebrating its 20th anniversary in a number of ways this month.

On November 18, a large mosaic created by the students will be unveiled at the school, followed by games and a lolly scramble.

Celebrations will continue on November 20. After a thanksgiving service and morning tea at the Snells Beach Baptist Church, a pair of doves will be released to commemorate

the milestone.

Principal Helen Pearson says during its 20-year history the school has developed a strong academic and sports record, having won many awards in a variety of sports codes.

"The school is in good heart and staff have a great sense of anticipation about new initiatives for next year," she says.

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