

# the acorn.



**ACORN  
FOUNDATION**  
WESTERN BAY OF PLENTY

## Local Impact Funds Open for Applications

A new chapter in community-led giving is taking shape in the Western Bay of Plenty, with five Local Impact Funds open for applications from 1 February to 14 March. Designed to be simple and accessible, these funds create a pathway for local people to support the grassroots projects, neighbourhood initiatives and everyday good sorts who help make their communities stronger.

The concept is rooted in a straightforward idea: when people give locally, the local community benefits directly. Each fund has been established through the generosity of donors who wanted their contributions to make a long-term difference close to home. Gifts of any size are invested through Acorn, with the original donation preserved in perpetuity. Over time, the investment income helps grow each fund and creates annual distributions that can be granted back into the community, offering lasting support where it's needed. Katikati offered the first look at what place-based

funds could achieve when it launched its Local Impact Fund (previously the Katikati Acorn Fund) in 2024.

Supported by remaining Project Generate funds and the generosity of a local couple, Katikati became the first Western Bay community to distribute grants through this new model. Funding was awarded to initiatives such as Katikati Men with Cancer, Scouts Katikati, POTS Katikati Primary, Matahui Road School, Reach Out Trust and the Katikati Community Centre, showcasing the fund's purpose of backing practical, locally informed projects created by people who know their community best.

Building on Katikati's early success, four additional communities, Waihi Beach, Tauranga Moana, Te Puke and Kaituna (Maketu-Pukehina), have now established their own Local Impact Funds. Their first granting round has begun in early 2026, supporting a wide range of local priorities from youth and wellbeing initiatives to feel-good grassroots projects, all aimed at strengthening the community and bringing people together.

A focus on accessibility has shaped the application process from the outset with a simple application form developed to make applying less intimidating, especially for those new to funding. Through a partnership with Socialink, applications are open to non-registered groups and everyday locals doing good mahi in their communities, ensuring volunteer-led and informal initiatives can easily seek support.

Each Local Impact Fund is guided by a small committee of local volunteers whose community connection helps shape distribution decisions and their insight keeps the process firmly rooted in the needs of their community. Together, the five Local Impact Funds will create a positive shift in grassroots community giving and support, this year, and for many years to come.

To find out more about how to apply, or how to donate, please visit the funding section of our website.



**Want to learn more about  
the Local Impact Funds?**



Contact:  
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matt@acornfoundation.nz



## Western Bay Emergency Response Fund: Supporting Recovery

In late January, Tauranga Moana and the Western Bay of Plenty experienced severe weather that left a lasting mark across our region. Record-breaking rainfall fell within a single day, triggering flooding and landslides that disrupted homes, roads, and the everyday rhythms of community life.

On 21 January 2026, a State of Emergency was declared as the scale of the situation became clear. Landslides in Mount Maunganui and Welcome Bay, along with widespread evacuations and road closures, created uncertainty for many neighbourhoods. For some, the impacts were immediate and visible. For others, the effects are still unfolding as recovery continues.

In the days that followed, something else became clear too. Many corners of our community (and wider) came together to check in their neighbours, share information, offer spare rooms, cooked meals, and volunteer their time.

Alongside that care came a steady question from many corners of the community: how can we help in a way that truly makes a difference?

The Western Bay Emergency Response Fund, for many generous donors, helped answer that question.

The fund is a collaborative initiative between Acorn Foundation, BayTrust, TECT, Tauranga City Council, and Western Bay of Plenty District Council, created to provide a trusted, coordinated way for community generosity to support the gaps left in the community as it recovers.

The Emergency Response Fund supports local charities, marae, and community organisations that are deeply connected to their communities and are supporting people through practical social assistance, supporting wellbeing, and helping communities find their footing again.

*"Our region has been through a challenging time, and we know how strongly people want to support one another," says Matty Nicholson of Acorn Foundation. "This fund allows that generosity to be channelled through organisations that know their communities well and will be walking alongside them in the weeks and months ahead."*

The response has been humbling. In just over a week, more than \$200,000 was raised through donations from individuals, local businesses, and regional partners.

As the months ahead unfold, Acorn Foundation and its partners will continue working closely with charities and community groups, listening as needs change and ensuring support reaches where it is most needed.

Recovery does not happen all at once, and having local organisations resourced to respond over time is vital.

The Western Bay Emergency Response Fund is one way our community can continue to support each other throughout the longer journey of recovery.

If you would like to support this work, donations can be made by scanning the QR code below. All donations remain within the Western Bay of Plenty.



Use your camera to scan the QR Code



Charity Highlight:

## Living Life Wide Open - The Lasting Impact of Youth Encounter

**A story of transformation: Vince**  
In 2018, a young man referred to Youth Encounter was disengaged from school, involved in crime, and caught between cultural expectations and a new environment. Unsure where he belonged, his first step into Youth Encounter came through dirt-bike group therapy.

From there, his journey deepened through residential camps, mentoring, and more than 50 hours of clinical counselling. Over time, he began rebuilding his confidence, resilience, and sense of identity. Eight years on, Vince now lives in Brisbane, runs his own startup employing ten people, and mentors others. His story is one of many that show how the right support, at the right time, can change the trajectory of a young person's life.

**Why Youth Encounter exists**  
For more than 15 years, Youth Encounter has supported young people across Aotearoa New Zealand to find purpose, build resilience, and grow in confidence. Founded in 2009, what began as dirt-bike camps has grown into a charitable trust offering counselling, mentoring, group therapy, leadership development, and residential camps.

Many young people experience disconnection, hopelessness, or feel trapped by their circumstances. Youth Encounter meets rangatahi "where they are", offering activity-based, therapeutic programmes that guide youth from insecurity to identity, despair to hope, and disconnection to belonging.

**Measurable impact for young people**  
Since 2016, Youth Encounter has worked with more than 1,400 young people. Around 40% have received intensive one-on-one counselling or mentoring. Over the past eight years:

- 89% of participants reported improved self-worth and identity
- 84% felt more motivated and forward-looking

A 2025 follow-up survey, conducted three years after participation, found long-term ripple effects:

- Confidence increased by 150%
- 67% had taken on leadership roles in work or their community
- 61% were mentoring or supporting other young people



Photo: Youth Encounter Dirt Bike Therapy

- 48% volunteered regularly
- 67% reported a meaningful spiritual journey
- 67% were employed, 17% were studying, and only 13% were not in employment or education, significantly lower than the national average

For some families, philanthropy becomes a way to honour a loved one while helping others find hope.

In 2025, Youth Encounter received \$20,000 in funding from the Roy & Mary McGowan Fund and the Joshua Tingey Memorial Fund, administered by Acorn Foundation. This support helps ensure rangatahi continue to receive the guidance, care, and opportunity they need to change the course of their lives.

Theresa Tingey, Joshua's mother, says Youth Encounter was a natural fit for her son's memorial fund.

*"Youth Encounter seemed an obvious fit for Joshua's fund to support. Since childhood, along with his brothers, motocross was a big part of our home. Mary Perkins, 'Scary Mary', now Wanhill, was much revered in our house of motocross-riding boys. Josh's path crossed with Mary and Joel at one of Youth Encounter's fundraising rides, and their dedication to making life better for troubled youth through motorbikes really resonated with us."*



Photo: Josh Tingey

*"When Josh died in 2018, we were devastated. But we were determined to salvage some good out of something so bad. We established a memorial fund with Acorn Foundation, seed-funded by donations from his university surveying mates. That fund has now become Joshua's legacy. As Joshua had supported and influenced so many in his 28 years, and with his love of motocross, it was a no-brainer to support Youth Encounter. Mary, Joel, and their team's passion, professionalism, and mentorship are outstanding."*

One of Joshua's brothers said, *'Imagine if Josh's fund changes someone's life.'* There is no greater way to honour his memory. We are proud to support Youth Encounter."

**Support through Acorn Foundation**  
Since 2014, Acorn Foundation donors have helped Youth Encounter expand its reach and deepen its impact. Through this collective generosity, more young people are being supported to move from struggle towards belonging, hope, and thriving futures.

## How Acorn's Kaituna Local Impact Fund Was Created

When David and Susan Campbell first arrived in the Bay of Plenty, they expected it would be a place they visited occasionally. Instead, they quickly fell in love with Maketū and decided to make it home.

*"After we'd been here for a few months, we were just so in love with the village and the people and the country that we decided we were going to stay,"* Susan says.

Running the local dairy connected the Campbells with almost everyone in the community, and their involvement deepened through the establishment of a Rotary Club in Maketū, which served the town for 19 years.

Through this work, they saw firsthand what was possible when people came together with a shared purpose.

Both David and Susan brought with them a strong belief in collective action. Susan's teaching work in the United States and Fiji highlighted the power of education in under-resourced communities, while David's early career in the drug and alcohol treatment sector reinforced the importance of collaboration in creating lasting change. Together, these experiences shaped a lifelong commitment to giving back.

As long-time Acorn Foundation donors, the Campbells were used to directing their annual distributions. Over time, however, they found those decisions increasingly difficult, with so many worthwhile causes needing support.

That challenge led to a simple but powerful idea: creating a dedicated fund for the Maketū and Kaituna area, allowing people who care about the community to pool their generosity and support local causes together.

Working alongside Acorn, the Campbells helped establish the Kaituna Local Impact Fund, a collective, long-term fund designed to support grassroots organisations across the region.



Photo: The Acorn Team with The Campbells in Maketū

*"The concept of a Local Impact Fund is the next level of what makes Acorn significant,"* David says. *"It pools more resources into the community and multiplies the impact."*

With the fund set to distribute its first grants in 2026, David and Susan are confident in its future. David points to Acorn's proven model of collective giving.

*"I don't just have hope,"* he says. *"I have confidence. The evidence is there — collective giving works."*

For the Campbells, the Kaituna Local Impact Fund is about building something that will continue to support the community for generations, showing that meaningful impact doesn't require great wealth, just a willingness to start and give together.



**Supercharge your giving.**  
Unlock your 33% tax credit.

[AcornFoundation.org.nz](https://AcornFoundation.org.nz)



Scan QR Code to learn more



# Opening Doors Through Scholarships Across the Western Bay of Plenty



The **2025 Bill & Doris Eaddy Rowing Scholarship** has been awarded to **Georgia Kendrick** (left), **Tegan O'Dwyer** (right), and **Jemima Glaholm** (not pictured) in recognition of their potential in rowing. Delivered in partnership with the Adastra Foundation, the scholarship supports young rowers to develop both their sporting excellence and personal growth.



**Liika Farrelly**, a student from Mount Maunganui College, is the 2025 recipient of the **Frank & Fay Sleath Music Scholarship**. It supports students with strong musical ability and a passion for further music study, and will help Liika continue her journey as she pursues a Bachelor of Commercial Music at Massey University.



**Claudia Barrett**, a student from the Bay of Plenty, is the recipient of the **2025 BOP Medical Students Scholarship**. The scholarship supports Claudia as she continues her Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery studies at the University of Auckland while serving her community as an EMT with St John.



**India Keam**, a student from Bethlehem College, is the recipient of the **Friends of Bethlehem College Scholarship**. The scholarship recognises her strong academic achievement and commitment to service, and will support her as she prepares to begin a Bachelor of Laws at the University of Waikato.



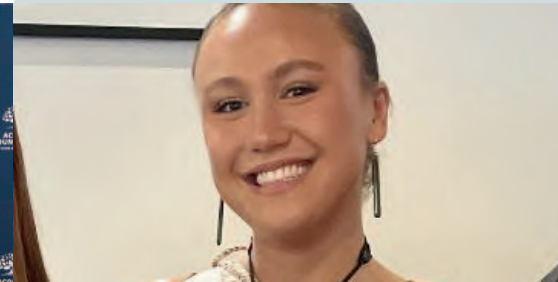
**Tai Maehae**, a student from the Bay of Plenty, is the recipient of the **2025 BOP Medical Students Scholarship**. The scholarship supports Tai as he continues his Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery studies at the University of Auckland, including his upcoming fifth-year placement at Middlemore Hospital.



**Te Taiwhenua Murray**, a former student at Tauranga Boys' College, is the 2025 recipient of the **Cashmore Family Scholarship**. From Matakana Island, he has demonstrated exceptional leadership and commitment throughout his schooling, reflecting the purpose of this three-year scholarship to support students with strong potential to excel.



**Aadesh Sarao**, a student from Bethlehem College, is the recipient of the **Bethlehem College International Travel Award**. With the support of this scholarship, he will travel independently to Spain in 2026 to immerse himself in the Spanish language and culture. The award supports Bethlehem College students to broaden their horizons through international travel and personal growth.



**Arabella Urwin**, a student from Ngāi Tamarāwaho, is the recipient of the **Ngāi Tamarāwaho Peri Kohu Memorial Scholarship**. The scholarship supports Arabella as she continues her Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery studies, recognising her commitment to serving her people and improving Māori health outcomes.



**Jordan Hughes**, a former student from Katikati College, is the recipient of the **Shepherd Fletcher Katikati College Scholarship**. He is beginning a Bachelor of Engineering with Honours in Civil Engineering at the University of Waikato, following years of consistent academic effort and involvement at school.



**Koen McKenzie**, a 16-year-old from Ōmokoroa, is the first recipient of the **Live The Life You Love Award**, established by Momenta Charitable Trust. The award will support Koen to pursue his dream of becoming a professional actor, including travelling to New York in 2026 to study at the School of Creative and Performing Arts.



**Lucas Shepherd** is the recipient of the **FAME Year 13 Performing Arts Scholarship**. The \$5,000 scholarship, created by the FAME Trust and Acorn Foundation, supports Lucas as a Year 13 student from the Western Bay of Plenty pursuing tertiary study in the performing arts.



**Maioha Haimona-Ngawharau**, a student from the Bay of Plenty, is the recipient of the **2025 BOP Medical Students Scholarship**. The scholarship supports Maioha as they study a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery at the University of Otago, helping them remain focused on training to return home and serve their community.



The **Minola Grant Scholarship** was awarded to students from Tauranga Boys' College, and Tauranga Girls' College in recognition of their academic commitment and future aspirations. This year's recipients are **Amelia Grason** and **Senu Guruge** (Tauranga Girls' College), and **Sam Cross**, **Riley Hudson**, **Micah Jennings**, and **Noah Seluone** (Tauranga Boys' College), all supported through the Minola Grant Scholarship as they begin their tertiary studies. **William Kelly** (absent) was awarded the **Tauranga Boys' - Garth Sim Century Award**.



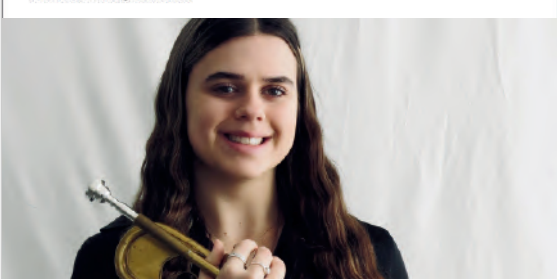
**Carter Hopoi**, a former student of Mount Maunganui College, is the recipient of the 2025 **Christine Tustain Sports Award**. The award supported Carter to compete at the U19 Basketball World Cup and recognises his outstanding achievement and potential as he continues his international basketball career.



The **2025 Bob & Joy Owens Scholarship** has been awarded to seven students from across the Western Bay of Plenty as they begin tertiary study. This year's recipients are **Harry Perry** (Tauranga Boys' College), **Jayden McQueen** (Mount Maunganui College), **Noah Ball** (Aquinas College), **Liam Smythe** (Otumoetai College), **Amelia Ellis** (Tauranga Girls' College), **Emily Flores** (Bethlehem College), and **Jules Delaere** (Te Puke High School), all supported through the Bob & Joy Owens Scholarship.



**Georgie Miller** and **Molly Boyd** are the 2025 recipients of the **Alwyn Robert Thompson scholarships**. Georgie will begin a Bachelor of Veterinary Science at Massey University, recognised for her commitment to animal care and community involvement, while Molly will commence a double degree in Law and Environment and Society at Victoria University of Wellington, recognised for her leadership and commitment to environmental law.



**Abby Lindsey** is the 2025 recipient of the **Christine Tustain Classical Music Award**. The award supports Abby as she continues her classical music journey as a talented trumpet player, recognising her dedication and potential in the performing arts.



**Kovee Pierce**, a former student from Whakatane High School, is the recipient of the **Colin Deed Grant**. The grant will support Kovee as she begins the NZ Certificate in Content Creation at Toi Ohomai Polytechnic, helping her focus on her studies and pursue a future in creative storytelling.



**Mara Takiwa** is the recipient of the **Jann Medicott Creative Arts Scholarship**. The scholarship supports Mara's creative practice in the Western Bay of Plenty, recognising her passion, vision, and commitment to the arts.



**Whakaio Seymour**, a former student from Te Puke High School, is the recipient of the **Butler Scholarship**. The scholarship will support Whakaio as he begins his Engineering studies at the University of Auckland, becoming the first in his family to attend university.





Welcome to the Acorn Family



Welcome to a new role at Acorn, Hayley! We're thrilled to welcome Hayley Nelson to Acorn's Distributions Committee.

As co-founder and Chair of the Western Bay Women's Fund, powered by Acorn, Hayley is a familiar face at many of our events and around the community. She also gives her time as Treasurer of Takitimu House and has recently joined the Tauranga Arts Festival Board, reflecting her deep commitment to the arts and community wellbeing.

We're delighted to have Hayley join our dedicated Distributions Committee volunteers, supporting Jo and Cam in their work connecting Acorn with communities across the Western Bay.



Welcome to Acorn Foundation, Matt McHardy! Matt, who is soon to kick off a new venture with a leading boutique NZ based private credit and investment firm, joins our Investment Advisory Committee, supporting oversight of our investment managers at Craigs Investment Partners. Matt brings deep investment governance expertise, with experience across investment committees, charitable trusts, and board roles including Enterprise Angels.

*"As Acorn continues to grow, strong investment expertise is essential to protect capital and support long-term community funding,"* Matt says. We're grateful to Matt for volunteering his time and expertise to support Acorn's future.

Thanks for Being Part of The Acorn Story



It's hard to say goodbye. Julie Carlson has wrapped up her amazing volunteer service for Acorn Foundation after six immense years on the Distributions Committee.

When Julie joined our committee in 2019, Acorn distributed \$1.8M for the benefit of the Western Bay of Plenty on behalf of our donors. This year, distributions reached \$5.1M, with applications nearly doubling in the past two years. Julie was an absolute master at reviewing financial performance and understanding the heart of what our local organisations do to support our region day after day.

We will really miss your passion for Acorn's work, Julie. Thanks for everything!



Our youngest member of Acorn's Distributions Committee, Annabelle Stewart, has now finished her volunteer time with Acorn.

Alongside her studies, Annabelle is also a tutor and a passionate brass band enthusiast, bringing energy and fresh perspective to the committee during her time with us. We're grateful for the contribution she has made to Acorn's work and for the time and care she gave to our community.

Best of luck with your advanced study, Annabelle. We'd love to hear how you're getting on. Thank you for everything you've given to Acorn.

Acorn Foundation Donors We Remember



**Alan Bickers**

1946 - 2025

Alan was Chair of the Distribution Committee for the Compass Community Trust, the organisation that later became Acorn Foundation. He and his wife Jill were strong Christians and active members of Holy Trinity Church.

Alan and Jill have two daughters, Erin and Phillipa. Erin lives in Dunedin with her husband and their three children, and Phillipa also lives in Dunedin. Together, Alan and Jill are well known for their long-standing commitment to faith, family and community life.



**Kath Christie**

1930 - 2025

Kath was born into a farming family in the Waikato and carried those values with her throughout her life. After marrying Lloyd in 1953, she returned to the Waikato and later helped build up a rundown farm on Oropi Road in TGA.

She enjoyed an active lifestyle, with a love for golf, badminton and skiing, and strongly valued community and family. Kath and Lloyd celebrated 70 years of marriage in 2023, just before Lloyd passed away. They were proud parents, grandparents and were great-grandparents.



**Jan Hickson**

1952 - 2025

Jan was a beloved mum to Rebecca and Kotua, and a treasured Nan to Kerenga, Ihaia, Te Rangipikitia and Te Kiri. Raised in Tauranga and educated at Tauranga Girls' College, Jan remained deeply connected to her community throughout her life.

She gave generously of her time and skills, including serving on the Acorn Foundation Board and Distributions Committee from 2010 to 2013. Jan loved the outdoors, especially skiing, and will be remembered for her warmth, integrity and genuine care for others.



**Jennifer Spencer**

1941 - 2025

Jennifer Spencer moved to NZ from the UK with her husband, John, in 1965. After time spent in Wellington, Vancouver and Auckland, they chose to settle in Katikati, where they ran a 12-acre kiwifruit orchard before later building a home in the Kaimai hills. Jennifer worked as a pharmacist, while John was an early IT professional.

Following John's death in 2005, Jennifer returned to the Bay of Plenty. She enjoyed walking, reading and staying connected to her family in the UK, supported through a family trust.



**Joan Dryden**

1941 - 2025

Joan Dryden was born in Napier in December 1942. She spent much of her working life in retail and sales, roles that suited her practical nature and love of people. Joan married Maurice in 1983, and together they shared a strong commitment to faith and service.

They managed a Christian Youth Hostel in Auckland before later moving to Tauranga, where they were involved with ME/CFS Support (BOP) Inc. Joan will be remembered for her quiet dedication and care for others.