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Sportspeople of Year





Ruby Lasini with the gold medal she won at this year's New Zealand Secondary Schools Athletics Championships. Photo: Supplied.

By Frank Neill

Six Wainuiomata students were presented Sportspersons of the Year awards in their sports at this year's College Sport Wellington Sportsperson of the Year Awards (known as the SPOTYS).

Wainuiomata students scooped the pool in both Netball and Kī-o-Rahi.

Continued on page 2.

Desire Wilson, the 2026 Netball male Sportsperson of the Year. Photo: Frank Neill.

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YOUR **LOCAL** NEWSPAPER

Wainuiomata secures six SPOTYS

Continued from page 1.

Desire Wilson was named Netball's male Sportsperson of the Year and Fo'i Lemana was named Netball's female Sportsperson of the Year.

Niwa Purkis was named Kī-ō-Rahi's male Sportsperson of the Year and Mahina Riana Atama was named Kī-ō-Rahi's female Sportsperson of the year.

Carter Lewis was named Rugby League's male Sportsperson of the Year and Ruby Lasini is the 2026 Athlete with an Intellectual Disability Sportsperson of the Year.

A Wainuiomata High School student, Ruby excels in Track and Field.

She won one gold and two silver medals at the last New Zealand Secondary School Athletics Championships, held in December 2025.

Ruby won her gold medal in the Long Jump with a jump of 2.56 metres.

She then went on to win silver medals in both the Shot Put and the Javelin.

Ruby was named Wainuiomata High School's Sportsperson of the Year in 2024.

This came after she broke the North Island Athletes With Disabilities (AWD) Shot Put record with a throw of 6.05 metres earlier in the year.

Both Desire and Fo'i coach Netball at the Ulalei Primary School Netball League, giving generously of their time, and sharing their expertise and talent.

A student at Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Ara Whānui, Desire was selected for three New Zealand teams this year.

He was named in the New Zealand Under 19 mixed Indoor Netball team, the New Zealand Under 17 men's Outdoor Netball team to play in the Tri Nations tournament in Hamilton and in the New Zealand Māori Kī-ō-Rahi team.



Fo'i Lemana with her St Mary's College Sportsperson of the Year plate. Photo: Supplied.

Fo'i has also represented New Zealand.

She is a member of the New Zealand Men's and Mixed Netball Association's 17 and under team.

Fo'i is a student at St Mary's College, winning the school's 2026 Sportswoman of the Year Award.

She is also a Tairangi Training Partner.

Both Niwa and Mahina, who are students at Wainuiomata High School, represented New Zealand in Kī-ō-Rahi this year.

They were members of the winning New Zealand team that competed in the Taumata Tournament in Hamilton in October.

Their team defeated the New Zealand Māori team in the final.

Mahina also represented Great Britain at the start of the year, helping her team win the tournament.

A Wainuiomata High School student, Carter was selected to play Rugby League for Wellington, playing for the Wellington Orcas Under 16 team in this year's national tournament.

He also played for the Lower North Island Warriors team that played the curtain raiser for the Warriors match against the Dolphins.

Carter also plays Kī-ō-Rahi , and was selected for the New Zealand Māori secondary schools team.

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Your Community. Your News.

Bowling Club opening for Christmas feast

The Wainuiomata Bowling Club is opening its doors on Christmas Day so people can join them for a traditional Christmas feast.

"Whether you're celebrating with family, catching up with friends, or simply looking for somewhere to enjoy Christmas Day with good company, there's a place for you at our table," the club says.

The Christmas dinner will run from 1pm on Friday 25 December and will cost $40 a person.

The dinner will feature roast chicken and stuffing, glazed ham and roast potatoes, fresh salads, Pavlova with cream, traditional Christmas mince pies and Christmas trifle.

"We know Christmas can be a lonely time for some, and that's why we want everyone to feel welcome," the club says.

"You don't have to be a bowling club member to join us.

"Come along, enjoy a beautiful meal, share a laugh, meet some new friends and celebrate Christmas in true Wainuiomata Bowling Club style."

For catering purposes, people are asked to RSVP by Friday 11 December. People can register their interest to Secretary@wainuibowlingclub.nz.

Young Photographer Awards

By Frank Neill

The hugely successful Wainuiomata-based charity, The Art of Seeing Academy, is currently preparing for its second annual Young Photographer Awards on 2 December.

Celebrating the achievements of the region's youngest photographers, the awards evening will be held at the Little Theatre, Lower Hutt, starting at 6pm.

Following the successful inaugural awards in 2025, which attracted around 200 attendees, this year's event promises to be an even bigger celebration.

Unlike traditional photography competitions, the Art of Seeing Academy Awards recognise creativity, effort, personal growth and individual achievements, rather than ranking photographs against one another.

Young photographers will receive trophies and certificates, with their work showcased on the big screen in front of families, teachers, tutors and the wider community.

"Give 10 children a camera in the same location and you'll get ten completely different interpretations," the academy's founder Ana Lyubich says.

"That's what makes photography so exciting.

"We want every child to feel that their way of seeing the world matters."

The evening will also feature five guest speakers: photographers and educators Fairlie Atkinson, Tara Swan, Stephen Garner, Dave Allen and Emmeline Plachecki, sharing their experiences and inspiration with the next generation of photographers.

The event is free and open to everyone, thanks to the support of Hutt City Council and the Academy's sponsors.

What began as photography workshops for local children in Wainuiomata has grown into a creative programme reaching young people across the lower North Island.

Since its beginnings in 2023, the registered charity has delivered more than 300 photography workshops, expanding across Wellington, Hutt Valley, Kāpiti, Horowhenua, Wairarapa and as far north as Marton.

Hundreds of children and young people aged 7 to 18 have discovered photography through outdoor workshops, school programmes and community activities, many picking up a camera for the first time.

These have included workshops at Arakura School and one at the Wainuiomata Scenic Reserve on 24 October.

"When we started in Wainuiomata, we couldn't have imagined how far this would grow," Ana says.

"What's most exciting is seeing children return, develop their own photographic style and become more confident in their creative decisions.

"Some who started with no experience are now producing photographs that genuinely surprise us."

The academy's work continues well beyond the workshops.

Its team has reviewed more than 15,000 photographs, carefully selecting images for an online gallery that now features more than 375 individual collections showcasing young photographers' work.

For many children, seeing their photographs displayed publicly is a significant milestone, giving them a sense of achievement and encouraging them to continue exploring their creativity, Ana says. Tickets to the Young Photographer Awards are available at https://events.humanitix.com/young-photographer-awards-2026. The Art of Seeing Academy is a registered New Zealand charity (CC62617) providing accessible photography education for children and young people aged 7 to 18, with cameras available for those who need them. Its website is https://photographyforkids.org.



A young photographer taking a photo during the Art of Seeing Academy's Wainuiomata workshop on 24 October. Photo: Supplied.

inbrief

Guided walk

Discover Gollan's Valley Guided Walk will be held from 9am to 1pm on Sunday 6 December.

Organised by Greater Wellington Regional Council, the walk will start at the Gollan's Valley Farm Track, Pencarrow Head.

"This special opportunity will take you through a landscape of open hills, wetlands, regenerating native bush, and spectacular harbour views while you learn about the history and ecology of this unique area," Greater Wellington says.

"Greater Wellington recently acquired this 1,366-hectare property, which links the Northern Forest and Parangarahu Lakes sections of East Harbour Regional Park and contains important natural and cultural heritage values."

Registrations are extremely limited and can be made at https://allevents.in/lower-hutt/discover-gollans-valley-guided-walk/200031015586711.









Young Piripi Steer sits on Santa's knee, accompanied by his father Storm Steer in Santa's Grotto at last year's Christmas in the Nui. Photo: Frank Neill.

Xmas in the Nui on 28 November

By Frank Neill

Christmas in the Nui will come to Queen Street in 10 days time, on Saturday 28 November.

It will run in the town centre from 11am to 3pm.

Christmas in the Nui will feature live entertainment, family activities, a scavenger hunt, give aways, food and market stalls, and more.

"We can't wait to bring everyone together," Love Wainuiomata says.

"Tell the whānau, bring your friends and come together for another big Christmas in the Nui celebration."

It will be "a day about our people, our families and coming together to celebrate the place we call home.

"A huge thank you to the sponsors, volunteers, local businesses and everyone who helps make this event possible.

"Your support helps bring our community together year after year," Love Wainuiomata says.

Car crashes into Black Creek

One person died after a car crashed into Black Creek behind Bryan Heath Park on Monday 16 November.

Police were called to the scene, near Fitzherbert Road, at around 6.50am.

The Wainuiomata Volunteer Fire Brigade was also called and attended the accident.

"Sadly, the sole occupant of the vehicle was located deceased at the scene," the Police say.

The Serious Crash Unit attended and carried out a scene examination.

Enquiries into the circumstances of the crash are ongoing, the Police say.

Five decades of sporting history



Up-and-coming Squash junior Wolf Walbaekken (left) about to cut the 50th birthday cake watched by Wayne Englebretsen, an active and supportive Wainuiomata Squash Club Life Member. Photo: Supplied.

The Wainuiomata Squash Club officially marked its 50th Jubilee on 30 and 31 October, bringing together past and present players, families, and foundation members for a weekend of celebration to honour five decades of local sporting history.

The milestone event featured a packed schedule of activities, including commemorative court play, special historical memorabilia displays, and a formal jubilee dinner where generations of members shared stories from the club's rich history.

Past legends and current club champions took to the courts for a series of friendly exhibition matches, while the formal dinner provided an opportunity to recognise life members, long-serving volunteers and sponsors who built the club's foundation.

"Reaching 50 years is an incredible milestone that belongs to every volunteer, committee member, and player who has stepped onto our courts since 1976," the club's Chairman Harold Walbaekken says.

"Seeing our founding members reconnecting alongside our newest junior players highlights the true community spirit that defines Wainuiomata and Wainuiomata Squash."

From its establishment in 1976, the club has grown from a modest local initiative into a proud, vital sporting institution.

Last year, the club won three of Wellington's major Squash Awards, including Club of the Year.

Today, the Wainuiomata Squash Club continues to foster a love for the sport, develop rising junior talent, and support all of its players.

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Families looking for additional care and support for elderly loved ones are being encouraged to enquire about short-term and respite care options at Aroha Care Centre in Taita.

Aroha Care Centre for the Elderly and Retirement Village provides a supportive and welcoming environment, with personalised care tailored to meet the individual needs of residents.

The centre is currently welcoming enquiries from families interested in respite and short-term stays, offering flexible care arrangements for those who need extra support or a temporary break from their usual care routines.

Having appropriate care available can provide reassurance for families, particularly when circumstances change or additional assistance is needed.



Aroha Care Centre is Ministry of Health certified and holds a contract with Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora.

Families wishing to find out more about the services available, discuss individual care requirements or arrange a visit can contact the centre's manager on 04 567 1026.

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Online shopping scam warning

There are three checks people should make before they buy from an online shop, says Sync Tech NZ, an IT help business for Wainuiomata and Hutt Valley homes and businesses.

Fake online shops advertise on Facebook and Instagram, especially before Black Friday and Christmas.

Before buying from a shop you haven't used before, check three things, says Sync Tech NZ, 0800 SYNCED.

First, the price: if it's far below every other seller, be wary.

Second, contact details: a real business has a phone number and proper contact details, not just an email address or social media links.

Third, the web address: look for small misspellings of a real brand, and remember a .co.nz address doesn't prove a shop is genuine.

Pay by credit card where you can, and if you think you've been caught, call your bank straight away.

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Wainuiomata news

Not a good day for Cricketers

By Frank Neill

Wainuiomata's premier Cricketers did not have such a good day on 14 November, with the two men's teams and the women's team all losing their matches.

The women's team only just lost a very tightly contested encounter with Collegians.

It took until the last ball of the match for Collegians to finally overtake Wainuiomata.

Batting first on Liardet Park, Wainuiomata scored 146 for the loss of six wickets in their 20 overs.

Collegians reached 148 for the loss of one wicket in pipping Wainuiomata.

Marina McCarthy was outstanding with the bat for Wainuiomata, scoring a half century and going on to reach 55 not out.

She scored the runs very rapidly, facing only 27 deliveries.

Tauvale Whitman was the next best with the bat, and was 16 not out when the innings ended.

The only Collegians wicket to fall came when Maia Morgan ran out Jules Hickey.

Wainuiomata's next match is against Naenae Old Boys at Sladden Park on Sunday 22 November, starting at 2pm.

Wainuiomata's first XI was not able to take home advantage in their match against Naenae Old Boys.

Naenae batted first on Bryan Heath Park and were bowled out for 296 in the Premier 2 competition.

Wainuiomata only managed to score 139 before they were bowled out.

Kurtis Hynam-Nyberg bowled very well for Wainuiomata, taking four wickets for 53 runs.

Logan Stoupe took two wickets for 32 runs, Azadbir Singh Dhaliwal two wickets for 41 runs and Gurpreet Singh one wicket for 64 runs.

Jordan Rangikauhata came close to scoring a half century, but was out for 45, scored from 40 deliveries.

Jaimin Patel also batted well, reaching 34 from 24 deliveries.

Wainuiomata's next match is against Petone Riverside at the Petone Recreation Ground on Saturday 21 November, starting at 10.30am.

Victoria University comfortably defeated the Wainuiomata second XI in the Premier Reserve 1 match at Karori Park.

Batting first, Victoria University reached 249 before they were bowled out.

They then bowled Wainuiomata out for just 79 runs.

Kane Krebs bowled very well for Wainuiomata, taking three wickets for 48 runs.

Scott Babot took two wickets for 26 runs and Hunter Wilks took two wickets for 38 runs.

Shekhar Paliwal took one wicket for 29 runs, Shamsher Singh one wicket for 50 runs and Jordan Carr one wicket for 56 runs.

Only two Wainuiomata batsmen made double figures – Prabhjot Singh with 23 runs and Sameer Rai with 12 runs.

Wainuiomata's next match is against Hutt District at the Hutt Recreation Ground on 21 November, starting at 11am.



Local Cricketer representing NZ



Wainuiomata Cricket stalwart Craig Foster, who has been selected to represent New Zealand. Photo: Supplied.

By Frank Neill

Wainuiomata Cricketer Craig Foster has been selected to represent New Zealand.

Craig has been named in the New Zealand Over-50s Cricket squad that will compete in the International Masters Cricket Over 50s World Cup.

The tournament will be held in Hyderabad and runs from 24 January to 7 February.

A stalwart of Wainuiomata Cricket, Craig reached two major milestones in his team's match against Johnsonville on 31 October.

After hitting a half century in the match, Craig went on to score 55 runs from the 49 deliveries he faced. He then went on to bowl outstandingly, taking three wickets for 26 runs.

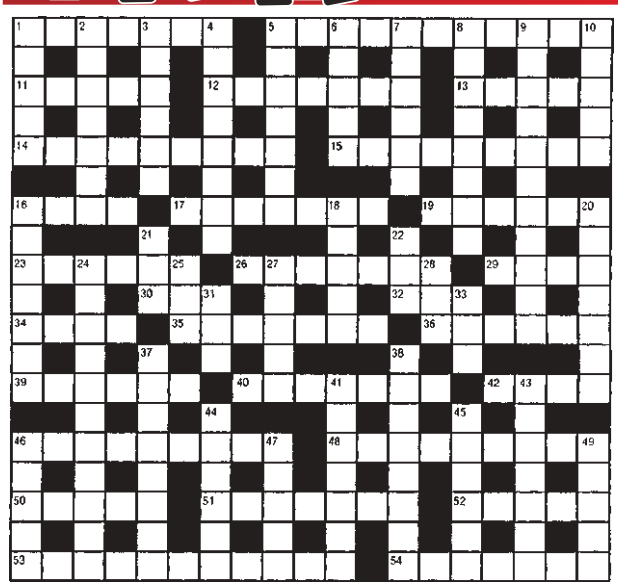
This saw him passing 10,000 premier runs and taking 600 premier wickets. Craig has now amassed 10,050 runs.

Craig Foster was officially inducted as one of Cricket Wellington's Vice-Presidents at Cricket Wellington's annual general meeting on 14 October.

Craig won his first trophy when he was named the Wainuiomata Midgets Counties team best all rounder in 1983-84.

He has since played more than 325 premier games for Wainuiomata and 80 premier games for Hutt Districts.

CROSSWORD Puzzle



ACROSS

1. Preliminary event; '...-raiser' (7)
5. Most entertaining person at the party (4,3,4)
11. Computer data (5)
12. Taught (7)
13. Town in Surrey (5)
14. Self-employed (9)
15. Concord (9)
16. Register (4)
17. Harsh (7)
19. Illustrate (6)
23. Rides bike (6)
26. Selling (7)
29. Assistant (4)
30. Era (3)
32. Small amount (3)
34. Drawn tight (4)
35. Stance (7)
36. Promotes (6)
39. Senility (6)
40. Outlawed (7)
42. Broad smile (4)
46. Beekeepers (9)
48. Amazed (9)
50. Complain (5)
51. Notable (7)
52. type of edible nut (5)
53. Eternity (11)
54. Confused (7)

DOWN

1. Precipice (5)
2. Hold back (7)
3. '... The Hun' (6)
4. Memorandum (8)
5. Most supple (7)
6. Earth; terra ... (5)
7. Snakes (6)
8. Dredged (8)
9. Atrocities (11)
10. Restrict (5)
16. Found (7)
18. More discourteous (5)
20. Disloyalty (7)
21. Bishops diocese (3)
22. Insect (3)
24. Rural in manner (11)
25. Soak up liquid (3)
27. Praise highly (5)
28. Chatter (3)
31. Member of upper classes(sl) (3)
33. Put on clothes (3)
37. Injure (8)
38. Multi-skilled employee (8)
41. Rubbers (7)
43. Extreme (7)
44. Property (6)
45. Bounded (6)
46. Dispute (5)
47. Steeple part (5)
49. Ate (5)

Solution
Last week: 28 October 2026

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Ulalei promotes education

While hundreds of tamariki will take the field during Ulalei Wainuiomata Sport's 2026 season, another important group will be helping make the competitions possible.

Ulalei will once again partner with Wainuiomata High School and The Get Group to provide refereeing opportunities for students, allowing them to gain valuable practical experience while working towards NCEA level 1 and 2 credits.

The initiative has become a key part of Ulalei's commitment to youth development, creating pathways for young people to build leadership, confidence and communication skills through sport.

Student referees play a vital role each week across both the Monday Night Football and Friday Night Touch competitions, helping ensure games are played in a positive and supportive environment.

Beyond learning the rules of the game, participants develop valuable life skills including decision-making, conflict resolution, teamwork and responsibility.

The programme also helps address a challenge faced by many community sports organisations, creating a sustainable pathway for developing the next generation of referees and sporting leaders.

For many students, the opportunity to combine practical experience with NCEA achievement provides an incentive to remain involved in sport while contributing back to their community.

"We have always prioritised community service over payment, recognising our referees with t-shirts, hoodies, and hats instead," the Ulalei organisers say.

"What sets them apart is their genuine commitment to giving back to the community while building valuable experience."

As Ulalei's competitions continue to grow, so too does the importance of investing in young leaders.

The refereeing programme is proving that sport can offer much more than physical activity. It can also provide educational opportunities, workplace-ready skills and valuable experiences that benefit young people long after the final whistle has blown.

Ulalei acknowledges the great support of Puku Pies and Kai, Nuku Ora, and NZ Community Trust in helping deliver its referees programme.



The Ulalei Referees 2026 cohort. Photo: Josh Hoffman.

Black Creek pathway needed

Wainuiomata High School student Keelan Renata is asking Hutt City Council to provide an off-road walking and cycling path alongside Black Creek.

Keelan presented the case for a Black Creek pathway in a recent submission he presented to the Council.

The Council does not currently have provision for such a path in its long term plan.

"The Black Creek corridor affects every tamaiti in our community," Keelan said in his submission..

It connects Wainuiomata High School, Wainuiomata Intermediate, Wainuiomata Primary, and St Claudine's Catholic School, serving students from Year 1 to Year 13.

"This isn't a project for one school – it's infrastructure for the next generation of Wainuiomata.

"Right now, many tamariki who want to cycle to school ride alongside busy roads. Others don't ride at all because it simply isn't safe.

"I see this in my own whānau. My cousins aren't allowed to bike to school because of how dangerous the roads are – and honestly, their parents are right to worry.

"An off-road path alongside the creek changes that," Keelan submitted.

"It gives tamariki a safe route to school, parents peace of mind, and rangatahi the freedom to travel independently.

"Lower Hutt talks about being an active, biking city.

"We've invested in the Petone Esplanade cycleway, which attracted 20,000 visits in its first five days . We have the Great Harbour Way and other cycle routes across the city.

"Yet Wainuiomata has none of that.

"We're the fastest-growing suburb in Lower Hutt, with 808 new homes, eight schools, and almost one in five people in Lower Hutt calling Wainuiomata home.

"And [we] still don't have a dedicated off-road cycling route for children to get to school safely.

"If we're serious about active communities, Wainuiomata must be part of that vision.



Keelan Renata, who has asked Hutt City Council to vote for a Black Creek pathway. Photo: Frank Neill.

"The Black Creek corridor is more than a route to school.

"It gives whānau a safe, free place to walk, run and cycle together.

"In a high-deprivation community, that isn't a nice to have, it's an investment in the health and wellbeing of our people.

"This project has been talked about for years.

"It's been in the Reserves Investment Strategy, and our community was told it was coming.

"It was already approved and funded in council planning, and designed not just as a pathway, but as a project that also improves water quality, resilience, and our environment," Keelan said.

He submitted that a yes vote "isn't just a win for Wainuiomata it's a win for all of Lower Hutt.

"It makes a statement that every community deserves to be connected, every child deserves a safe journey to school, and when one part of our city succeeds, we all succeed.

"An investment in Wainuiomata is an investment in the future of Lower Hutt," Keelan said.

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The champion Wainuiomata High School junior Kī-ō-Rahi team. Photo: Supplied.

WHS are Kī-ō-Rahi champions

By Frank Neill

Wainuiomata High School's junior Kī-ō-Rahi team are the new Wellington regional champions.

They won the title when they defeated Mana College 21-20 in the final, played on 12 November at Paraparaumu College.

This is the first time Wainuiomata High School has won a Wellington regional title.

Interestingly, they have won a number of national titles in the past but had never won a regional title until this month.

Wainuiomata High School is also hosting the first Tri Nations Kī-ō-Rahi Tournament at the school this Saturday, 21 November.

It will feature all the Wellington teams in the 14s, 16s, 19s, open and masters grades.

In addition two teams will be travelling from outside the region to take part. Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Tamaki Nui A Rua will travel from Dannevirke and Ngāti Kahungungu ki Tamatea will be travelling from Waipukurau.