Freemasons University Scholarships were initiated almost forty years ago for the purpose of rewarding excellence in students who were completing university degrees and, from a modest beginning, have grown to what it is today. The scholarships are now of two kinds, Postgraduate scholarships, worth $10,000 and University Scholarships worth $6,000. This year 17 men and 12 women were presented with their scholarships by Distinguished Professor Sir Richard Faull at a ceremony in the Legislative Chamber of Parliament on 10th May.

The selection process
From time to time the questions are asked as to why Freemasons are supporting the University Scholarships. The Freemasons Charity is continually reviewing the programme to ensure its continuing relevance and that scholarships are awarded to those who might not be able to continue the path towards their potential academic goals. The selection is rigorous and those chosen are the cream of the student crop. The process is best described by Dr Marc Dresser, a young Freemason on the Waikato University Selection Committee.

"There must be a demonstrable, significant and prolonged extra curricula charitable or public good work, they must be exceptional academically, they must be personable and we must be able to see a useful future. It matters not if they are male or female, it matters not what field they choose to participate in and it matters not what their personal financial status is. What matters is that each candidate has to convince us that they are going to be citizens who can make a difference to humanity, and about whom we can be proud of saying, we helped. And then, and only then, with round table committee consensus, do we select the worthy recipients".

David Fountain, Chair of the Massey University selection panel of four, which spent two days interviewing 24 short-listed applicants in person or by video link, comments, "The selected students, who are all at the upper end of their studies and with proven records, will go out to become the scientists, the engineers, the doctors, the vets, the IT professionals, the psychologists, the company directors, and so on both in this country and overseas. But, they will always be Kiwis, and all will remember how Freemasonry supported them in their final study year. If elitist means these people know what they are talking about then that is surely all to the good. We don't want "alternative facts" here! From my own involvement over many years, most applicants are from very modest backgrounds and are struggling financially."

These are young men and women, more often than not burdened by student debt, who have mastered hours of study to master facts, explanations, theories, ideas and large bodies of knowledge from lectures and laboratory classes. They then need to demonstrate that mastery to their university teachers in tests, examinations, assignments, and thesis work. Yet, despite all this, they have managed the time and energy to meet that special criteria of our programme, which is a demonstrated service to the wider community."

With an annual distribution of funds of about $1.3 million per annum, the Freemasons University Scholarships, including the organisation and presentation ceremony represent less than 20% of that total. The balance goes on supporting Lodge projects, grants to relief of need and research fellowships.
There is a misconception that the scholarships are awarded to “rich kids”. Often the converse is true as evidenced in this report from Rick Pullin, Chair of the Auckland panel. “Our panel were delighted to award a scholarship to her. She is your classic kiwi kid striving to do her very best. We always have an eye out for those gifted students for whom the scholarships may provide the critical difference between continuing to study or face withdrawal from high-level academic pursuits. The candidate in question reported that her single father supported her and her younger brother by providing them with food and shelter, but he cannot pay for her other living expenses, let alone fund her way through university.

As the applicant said. “Although I manage to get by with part time work, money is tight, and the stress that comes with this holds me back from my own personal success, as well as my ability to give back to the community. This scholarship would help to relieve financial burden off my shoulders, enabling me to push beyond monetary barriers and allow me to focus on my academic success, which I will ultimately use to pay value forward to society.”

Thank you again for such a wonderful day of celebrations, my mum and I loved it and felt very privileged! I just got offered my dream job in the policy analyst graduate programme at the NZ Treasury and wanted to let you know how much stronger I know this scholarship made my CV and how the panel interview gave me great practice in presenting myself and my strengths. Thank you for this amazing opportunity and supporting me. — Alice Ansley

Potential for Building Upskilling Scholarships

Manawatu Kilwinning Lodge leads the way

With the acknowledged shortage of skilled operatives in the building industry and ever-increasing complexities of material, systems and regulations, there is a strong case for supporting upskilling craftsmen who have completed their apprenticeships followed by a few years on the tools.

In 2016 a partnership comprising the Manawatu Kilwinning Lodge No.47, UCOL and Registered Master Builders, with support from The Freemasons Charity, instituted the Willson Lewis Scholarship for qualified tradespeople in the construction industry wishing to upskill. The scholarship, worth $6,000, was named in honour of two past Lodge members who ran significant construction businesses in Manawatu.

In his news release the Master of Manawatu Kilwinning Lodge, David Fountain, said, “I hope that the idea of this Freemasons Willson Lewis Scholarship might be taken up by other lodges around the country and education providers so that it might rival and complement the Freemasons Scholarship programme which is a major funder of university academic scholarships.”

This proposal links back to the origins of Freemasonry, which was about the care, training and upskilling of craftsmen. It could be a new beginning for the support of operative Master Masons or, as would be more appropriate for New Zealand construction systems, operative Master Builders and related trades. There could also be the opportunity for the recipients to be welcomed into the care of sponsoring Lodges where they could be encouraged to parallel their operative progress with the steps in today’s speculative Freemasonry.

Representatives of The Freemasons Charity have met with Manawatu Kilwinning Lodge with the suggestion that, following further trialling of the Manawatu programme, it could be progressively developed for national coverage. However, in order to achieve this, a partnership needs to be established with the Registered Master Builders Association and Tertiary Institutions. As it is also important to have the participation of local Lodges, those Lodges, which would like to express their interest, are asked to contact The Freemasons Charity. Email: tfc@freemasons.nz

Small things matter too

The Freemasons Charity largesse does not all get distributed to large projects and programmes. Many grants may only be a few hundred Dollars but, to the recipient, it can be the windfall that allows for the purchase of a vital piece of equipment. A random selection from the 61 grants made during the past year ...

- Teen Zone Levin – purchase of barbeque
- Hastings Women’s Refuge – replacement furniture and bedding
- Cystic Fibrosis Wellington – nebulisers
- Merrilands Primary School – swimming pool cover
- South Makiriki School – sports uniforms
- Blind Foundation – 3× iPads
- Birkenhead Scout Group – Replace tents
- Northern Rodney Blue Light Venture – replacement computer
- Far North Community Hospice – laptop for palliative care training

In addition to these local project grants there were 34 individual grants for relief of need.
A long-established Lodge revisits its awardees

New Zealand Pacific Lodge No.2 will be celebrating its 175th Anniversary during the last weekend in November. Each year it makes a number of charitable awards. This year’s recipients were brought together in July to speak about the background to their awards.

William Wallace Gibson was a Presbyterian Minister who served in a number of Parish roles and as the Executive Director of Presbyterian Support Services. He was a long-standing member of the Lodge whose bequest enabled scholarships to be awarded in the field of Religious Studies.

This year’s awardees included Lynne O’Brien, who is studying a number of Parish roles and as the Executive Director of Presbyterian Support Services. He was a long-standing member of the Lodge whose bequest enabled scholarships to be awarded in the field of Religious Studies.

Lynne, who is studying the field of Religious Studies, is undertaking an MA investigating how religiosity is being reflected in the social media. It explores the religious lives and identities of young people in the post-modern age. It compares the declining religion of past generations with that of young people for whom religions information and connections are only a click away.

These presentations were followed by the award of a New Zealand Pacific Lodge Organ Scholarship to Marcus Jackson, an honours student at the NZ School of Music, who then demonstrated the use of technology to enhance organ music, including easing the writing of organ scores.

Earlier this year the Lodge provided financial support for Camp Purple, which was a gathering of children suffering from the incurable Inflammatory Bowel Disease. A full description of the camp and the presentation by Gastroenterologist, Dr Richard Stein is to be found in the September issue of New Zealand Freemason.

In the Swim

The Potter Trust supports the John Walker Field of Dreams Foundation

The John Walker ‘Find Your Field of Dreams’ Foundation has the aim of positively impacting the lives of young people in Auckland’s areas of greatest need by providing them with opportunities to live healthy, active lifestyles and pursue a positive pathway through sport and physical recreation. They believe this will encourage them to become prosperous citizens, connected with and committed to their community. Community Swim is one of their programmes, supported by the Potter Masonic Trust.

Over 80 deaths occur each year in New Zealand from drowning - most of which are avoidable. Of these, Pāuaika children are most at risk. To prevent drownings, swimming is an essential skill, requiring many hours of learning and practice in the water.

However, access to swimming instruction is not uniform across Auckland South. Since the transfer of operational budgets directly to school boards and the introduction of stricter requirements for school pool testing and operations, many schools have exited from running their own pools and swimming programmes.

Even though school groups are offered free access to pools especially for low socio-economic schools, the cost of arranging transport to a public pool is a significant barrier. In addition instructor costs to support teachers who are not confident in teaching swimming are also added barriers.

The Community Swim Programme has been developed to address these issues by providing free learn to swim lessons including pool entry, transportation and instructors at no charge to teach school children the basic yet essential skills of swimming to be safe around the water. The programme offers free learn to swim lessons for Year’s 3 to 6 students attending Auckland South schools. It is estimated that approximately 162,000 children will receive free lessons annually. The lessons include transport to one of the many facilities available.

The programme also runs a Portable Pool in four Mangere Schools. This early intervention programme, with potential barriers removed, delivered in partnership with schools and the Potter Masonic Trust, is geared to build water confidence and swimming skills.
Up Up and Away

One semester at Auckland and Heartland Scholar off to Oxford

Emma Godden

The 2018 Freemasons Heartland Bank Scholarships, available to children and grandchildren of Freemasons, commencing tertiary study, are open for application from October 1st to 1st February.

Receipt of a 2017 scholarship has enabled Northern Division recipient, Emma Godden, to get away to a great start on her academic career. Emma writes: “My first semester at Auckland University was great. I loved everything about university life and learning to live away from home. At the end of the semester my grades were one A and three A+.

Emma has recently had a place at Oxford University confirmed. “In October I will be starting a degree at Oxford University confirmed,” Emma writes. “My first semester at Auckland University has enabled me to get used to University Life and learn how to adapt my way of studying for University.

I am excited to see what the next four years of my life will hold while I am studying at Oxford. I am very thankful for the Heartland Bank Freemasons Scholarship as it took a huge amount of the financial pressure off me while I was in Auckland and has allowed me to focus on my studies.

Emily Boyle

Southern Division recipient Emily writes. “So far my first year studying at the University of Otago has been an incredible experience. I have settled in well to life at Arana College and have been lucky enough to make lots of new friends from across New Zealand. The student life in Dunedin is truly one of a kind and alongside working hard on my studies I have been having a lot of fun exploring the city.

I am studying Law and a Bachelor of Science majoring in genetics. I am thoroughly enjoying my course and I really like how diverse my range of papers has been, from maths and chemistry to law. I have been working hard to achieve my study goals and I was very happy with my semester one results.

I would like to thank Heartland Bank and Freemasons New Zealand for the wonderful support they have kindly given me.”

Hayley McConachy

Central Division recipient writes of the transition to University. “Since leaving my high school, Whanganui Girls’ College, I have become a full-time student at Victoria University in Wellington. I have continued with my initial plan of studying Biomedical Science majoring in Human Genetics and this past June I completed my first trimester and my first set of exams, which went very well and I will continue with my course for this next trimester and further strengthen my passion for science.

Attending university is a massive financial step and receiving the Heartland Bank Freemasons Scholarships has given me the security to move from Whanganui to Wellington to begin my first year at Victoria University and given me the opportunity to devote my first year entirely to study. Receiving this scholarship has been a massive help and kick-start financially to my first year at university.

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