

Media Release

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Nursing scholarship supports and strengthens cultural journey

A nursing student with a passion for hauora Māori-led care has been named as the recipient for Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and Whānau Āwhina Plunket's Mere Harper and Ria Tikini Memorial Scholarship.

Toi Ohomai nursing student Krystle George was awarded the annual scholarship which commemorates the work of Mere Harper and Ria Tikini – two highly respected Māori midwives and healers from Karitāne who were instrumental in starting Plunket.

Krystle says she's truly grateful for the support which couldn't come at a better time.

“As a single mother of two school-aged tamariki, it's a huge financial help – particularly during these tough economic times.”

Krystle plans to work as a practice nurse within a Hauora GP clinic when she graduates.

“With Māori nurses under-represented in our communities, I would like to encourage more Māori to pursue a career in nursing.”

Whānau Āwhina Plunket Chief Executive, Fiona Kingsford says it is an honour to support students like Krystle.

“This scholarship is an opportunity to celebrate our very special history, while also helping to equip the next generation of Māori nurses with the skills, tools and knowledge to support those who need it most.

“We congratulate Krystle on her hard work and look forward to seeing her achievements in the Māori health and wellbeing space.”

Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu General Manager of Oranga, Trevor McGlinchey is delighted to be working with Whānau Āwhina Plunket through this shared initiative.

“Improving and protecting the hauora of our whānau is one of our prime concerns as an iwi and supporting more students of Ngāi Tahu descent to enter the health workforce is one of a variety of positive actions we are taking to assist with this goal.”

Krystle says the scholarship has strengthened her cultural journey, prompting her to further explore her ancestral roots.

“I've since discovered that I whakapapa back to Awarua and Waihōpai Rūnaka, and have established an affiliation with Awarua by registering with them. I'm grateful to have this learning opportunity



and am keen to explore other ways I can acknowledge my heritage while making a difference in my career.”

The Mere Harper and Ria Tikini Memorial Scholarship provides financial support of \$3,000 to a full-time nursing student in their final year of study who is of Ngāi Tahu descent.

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For more information, please contact:

Meg Maher

Communications Advisor

M: 027 214 9262, media@plunket.org.nz



Photo caption: This year’s recipient of the Mere Harper and Ria Tikini Memorial Scholarship, Toi Ohomai nursing student Krystle George.

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About Whānau Āwhina Plunket

Pēpi, tamariki and whānau are at the heart of Whānau Āwhina Plunket. The charity is Aotearoa New Zealand's largest health and wellbeing support service for tamariki – seeing 290,000 under-fives. About 80% of newborns are enrolled with Whānau Āwhina Plunket each year.

Our nurses provide clinical assessments, and along with Kaiāwhina and Community Karitāne, support whānau and families, through home and clinic visits. PlunketLine 0800 933 922 is a free 24/7 telephone advice service for parents and whānau, where callers can speak to a registered nurse for advice, or call the Admin Line on 0800 184 803 to make an appointment in your area. Our website plunket.org.nz is one of the country's most widely read digital child health resources, with 1.8 million visits each year. It is available data-free through the Zero Data portal at zero.govt.nz, and you can choose to view it in English or te reo Māori.