

Coming home to share her double degree

Vanessa Cassels could get a job anywhere – in fact, she had a scholarship offer and another job before returning to her roots in Tokoroa.

The Health Waikato dental therapist was in hot demand as one of the first in New Zealand to receive the recently introduced dual degree in dental therapy and dental hygiene.

Vanessa graduated from Auckland University of Technology (AUT) last year with a Bachelor of Health Science, and with her qualifications could have landed a job in her field just about anywhere she wanted.

Luckily for Tokoroa and the South Waikato district, home is where the heart is.

The locally born and bred dental therapist now spends her working week at one of five Tokoroa primary and intermediate schools offering dental health treatment, prevention, promotion and sometimes pain relief management.

She also takes the Denlite programme – an oral health assessment and prevention programme – at kohanga reo and early childcare centres.

Vanessa, a mother of two; Victor, 3, and Ivy-Jean, 4, is an ex-Forest View High School student.

“I love my job. It’s awesome – the students make it great.”

And as for the murder house rumours?

Only from parents she says; her patients are too young to know what the murder house is.

“I have had a couple of students who were a little nervous when they first came in, but once they get to know me they’re fine.”

School Dental Services manager Diane Pevreal was doubly pleased with Vanessa’s appointment, after her position had been vacant for many months meaning therapists from all over the Waikato had to cover South Waikato.



SMILING BRIGHT AT HOME: Vanessa Cassels, Tokoroa’s new school dental therapist, offers oral health assessments, treatments, prevention and promotion in Tokoroa primary and intermediate schools.

“Things were looking pretty desperate in the South Waikato for a while there, but now in addition to the appointment of Vanessa, we also have the mobile clinic doing the rounds to enable all children to have easy access to services.

“Recent news that Tokoroa Hospital will have a new onsite dental clinic in place of the five school-owned clinics is also very good news for the community” said Diane.

“So South Waikato smiles are pretty well covered now, which is fantastic.”



BACK IN TOKOROA: Tokoroa Hospital’s newest midwife Rachael Kingsbury is pleased to be back working in the South Waikato after a two-year stint further north.

Pleased to be part of the team

Chances are, if you have had a baby in the past four years, you may have already seen Rachael Kingsbury’s face.

Rachael worked in the South Waikato as a self-employed midwife for two years before leaving to work at Waikato Hospital as a staff midwife for a further two.

Now she has joined forces with Tokoroa Hospital as the newest addition to its four-strong caseload midwives’ team.

“I absolutely love being a part of this team. It was always in my plan to come back to Tokoroa, and working for the hospital has been a fabulous way to do it,” she said.

“I love the continuity of the job. Getting to be a part of a woman’s pregnancy from the moment she finds out, right through until her baby is six weeks old.

“I enjoy seeing families grow and develop with their new addition – the whole scope of care I can give.”

While Rachael is originally from Christchurch and has only been working back in Tokoroa for one month, she has lived in the South Waikato for the past eight years.

“I live just out of Tokoroa township, and enjoy the lifestyle down here. The South Waikato is a large community that we serve as health professionals,

but a satisfying one too.”

Rachael graduated from Wintec with a Bachelor of Midwifery in 2005, and said she had always known she wanted a career path where she could work with other women.

“We see women from the moment their pregnancy is confirmed, then if we can, we deliver at Tokoroa Hospital or we arrange transfer to Waikato.

“After the birth, we visit the women at home for six weeks to check that mum is recovering well from the birth and adjusting well to their new role and support them with breastfeeding if they want it.

“We give mums and their families’ information and support around Tamariki Ora/Well Child practice and carry out Well Child checks.

“We also coordinate referrals to Plunket or GPs if necessary, so it’s a busy job between the four of us, but I love it.

So busy in fact, that Rachael is fully booked until December.

Because there are currently no self-employed midwives working in the South Waikato, the Tokoroa Hospital team encourage people to ring (07) 886 0891 to make an initial appointment when they need a midwife.

Work with us at Tokoroa Hospital

Tokoroa Hospital is a busy rural facility which offers a wide range of health services from general inpatient, emergency, specialist and support services.

As a place to work, Tokoroa Hospital offers learning opportunities, family friendly rosters and a warm and welcoming work environment.

Areas that currently have job vacancies include:

- district nursing
- medical officers/doctors
- clinical director
- physiotherapy; and
- hotel services casual work.

If you are interested in joining our 114-strong team, please visit www.waikatodhb.govt.nz

