

Unity Day 2026 Citations

Naomi Eunson – Nominated by Maria Roberts

Naomi Eunson is the President and Head Coach of the Napier Boxing Club, where she has created a welcoming, inclusive space for rangatahi to grow in confidence and wellbeing. Under Naomi's leadership, the club has become a positive pathway into the community for young people who may not feel comfortable in traditional team sports.

Naomi runs four youth sessions each week, including two male classes, a female class, and a free rainbow community class. Between 50 and 60 rangatahi attend regularly. Many are neurodivergent or struggle with confidence, and the club provides them with a safe place to belong. Through boxing, they develop physical fitness, self-belief, and pride in themselves.

Naomi's teaching extends beyond sport. She weaves life lessons into her coaching, helping young people learn healthy ways to manage anger, stress, and challenges. Some students progress into competitive boxing and return to mentor newer members, strengthening the club's culture of support.

Naomi also creates wider experiences for her athletes, travelling with them to events around the country and beyond. Much of her work is voluntary, driven by a strong sense of purpose. Naomi Eunson is deeply deserving of recognition for her commitment to uplifting Napier rangatahi.

Lisa Hardie – Nominated by Councillor Sally Crown

For more than 22 years, Lisa Hardie has given her time, expertise, and heart to Birthright Hawke's Bay Child and Family Care Trust. She has served as Board Chair, is currently Board Treasurer, and has also supported Birthright New Zealand as Treasurer for around 15 years. Her contribution has been steady, responsible, and deeply influential.

Lisa's commitment is grounded in personal experience and a genuine belief in the importance of supporting whānau. She has often spoken of the difference Birthright made for her own family and has turned that gratitude into decades of loyal service. She holds deep respect for the organisation's legacy and is committed to protecting its future.

Known for her clarity and attention to detail, Lisa brings strength and assurance to governance. She is principled, courageous, and prepared to make difficult decisions when required. Fellow board members describe her as smart, compassionate, and deeply loyal.

Birthright Hawke's Bay is stronger because of Lisa's wisdom, integrity, and enduring dedication. Her service reflects a lifetime commitment to whānau and community wellbeing.

Christine "Hubba" Harrison – Nominated by Maxine Boag

Christine "Hubba" Harrison is a tireless advocate for the Maraenui community and a powerful example of service in action. Competent, hard-working, and deeply community-minded, Hubba balances multiple roles with strength and determination.

With qualifications in Māori Studies, Teaching, Legal Executive Studies, and Educational Leadership, Hubba continues to study while working at Maraenui Kura and volunteering widely. As a mother of nine and a grandmother, she brings lived experience, empathy, and resilience to everything she does.

Hubba has long advocated for housing and community wellbeing. In 2011, she helped lead Maraenui residents in opposition to large-scale housing demolitions, standing up for whānau voices at a national level. Since 2013, she has served on the Tū Tangata Maraenui Trust committee, supporting the wellbeing and aspirations of the community.

For six years, Hubba has organised the Mānawatia a Matariki celebration, a vibrant event that highlights local talent, strengthens cultural connection, and brings hundreds of people together. Her leadership, advocacy, and service make her richly deserving of recognition for her contribution to community life in Napier.

Manawa Ora Mobile Community Hub Team – Nominated by Mark Cleary

The Manawa Ora Mobile Community Hub team has been supporting some of Napier's most vulnerable people through consistent, compassionate service. Led by James, the team has been heading out weekly for over a year, providing nourishing food and drinks to people sleeping rough or living in cars.

What sets this team apart is their genuine care for the people they meet. Their work is not just about food, but about connection. They listen, build trust, and create relationships grounded in respect. The team also provides essential supplies, offers guidance, and connects people with other organisations for ongoing support.

Manawa Ora is largely volunteer-driven, including cooks who reliably prepare meals and team members who show up week after week. They also work collaboratively with other groups supporting the same community, strengthening collective impact.

Through steady presence and kindness, the Manawa Ora team offers dignity, reassurance, and hope to those facing hardship. Their mahi reflects unity in action and demonstrates what is possible when people come together to care for their community.

Gracyn Moana-Poi – Nominated by Charlizza Matehe, Toi Matarua

Gracyn Moana-Poi is an inspiring rangatahi leader whose commitment to service, wellbeing, and advocacy has made a strong impact in Napier. Born and raised in Maraenui, Gracyn is the rangatahi leader of Tū Tārake, Toi Matarua's leadership programme.

After two years of service, Gracyn was promoted to Team Lead of the MokoBoys, who provide free lawn and garden assistance to kaumātua. He is passionate about mental health and fitness, and he combines these interests by leading two free weekly workouts for local rangatahi.

Gracyn has also contributed to international Indigenous research through the Family SPIRIT project, representing rangatahi Māori at hui in Australia, Hawai'i, and the United States. As the first elected member of the Napier Youth Council pursuing an alternative education pathway, he advocates for young people who do not thrive in mainstream systems.

He has recently completed his Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award, recognising his extensive community work. Gracyn's leadership, humility, and dedication ensure a strong future for rangatahi in his community.

Dee Murphy – Nominated by Pete Findlay

Dee Murphy has shown long-standing commitment to unity, service, and community wellbeing through quiet, consistent leadership. Raised in Napier, Dee built a life centred on care for others while raising his daughter as a single parent.

For over a decade, Dee has worked as a massage therapist, supporting both physical and emotional wellbeing. He has extended this kaupapa through voluntary service, including delivering weekly yoga classes in prisons as part of a rehabilitation programme focused on healing, dignity, and reintegration.

Dee later managed the kitchen at Open Door for two years, coordinating donations and preparing meals that supported multiple community organisations. Through this work, he formed trusted relationships with people experiencing homelessness, understanding food as a starting point for connection and care.

In his role in retail security, Dee showed that compassion and firm boundaries can coexist. Across all his mahi, Dee demonstrates respect, empathy, and responsibility. His sustained contribution reflects unity in action and makes him highly deserving of this award.

Orange Sky Hawke's Bay Volunteers – Nominated by Mark Cleary

The Orange Sky Hawke's Bay volunteer team represents the very best of community-led service. This nomination recognises every volunteer who gives their time, week after week, to support people experiencing homelessness and hardship with dignity and respect.

Orange Sky offers free laundry and shower services, but at its heart, the work is about connection. Volunteers take time to kōrero, learn names, remember stories, and build trust through consistency and genuine care. They show up in all weather, offering warmth, presence, and manaaki.

What makes this team special is not only what they do, but how they do it. Volunteers hold space without judgement, treat people with respect, and walk alongside whānau during difficult times. Their mahi creates a space where people feel seen, heard, and valued.

These ordinary people choose to do something extraordinary by serving their community with humility and aroha. The Orange Sky Hawke's Bay volunteers embody unity in its truest form.

Sarah Pihema – Nominated by Charlizza Matehe, Toi Matarua

Sarah Pihema is a dedicated rangatahi leader whose work bridges research, policy, and community action. At 24, she serves as a Rangatahi Research Lead and Kaimahi Rangatahi at Toi Matarua, with a strong commitment to uplifting Māori youth.

Sarah recently completed her Master's in Rangatahi Development Policy and is focused on embedding Māori values into youth policy at both local and national levels. She leads the Tū

Tārake Leadership Programme, which in 2025 marked ten years of suicide prevention mahi, and oversees Pakaru Pānui, a rangatahi communications team.

She has coordinated multiple Indigenous youth exchanges, creating international opportunities for Kahungunu rangatahi. Sarah is also an Award Leader for the Duke of Edinburgh Award, making it more accessible for young people in Maraenui.

With experience in academic research, national data systems, and community leadership, Sarah brings depth, integrity, and vision to her work. Her contribution continues to create lasting pathways for rangatahi wellbeing and leadership.

Shyann Raihania – Nominated by Jes Magill

Shyann Raihania is a co-founder of Te Hiwa a Māhaki, the first permanent hub for rangatahi in Maraenui. Established at the Maraenui shops, the hub reflects a strong “For us, By us” approach shaped by Shyann and her sister Monz’s lived experience as third-generation whānau in state care.

Driven by the need for a circuit-breaking solution, Shyann and Monz signed a lease without guaranteed funding, guided by a commitment to future generations. Te Hiwa a Māhaki is grounded in aroha, manaakitanga, and whanaungatanga, creating a trusted space where young people feel safe, supported, and valued.

The hub offers a range of services, including business mentorship, sports-based aspiration programmes, and support towards housing stability. Shyann’s strong networks and relationships have helped secure donors, seed funding, and council support.

Through courage, vision, and community connection, Shyann is helping to build pathways to independence for rangatahi in Maraenui and beyond.

John Wise – Nominated by Alwyn Corban

John Wise has dedicated his career to making learning accessible, practical, and empowering for everyday people. Appointed Head of Community Education at Hawke’s Bay Community College in 1976, John championed lifelong learning grounded in community needs.

Maraenui became the first pilot community for new engagement approaches under his leadership. These initiatives supported youth development, employment training, early childhood education, and community trust. Central to John’s philosophy was community self-help, ensuring people could take ownership of their own development.

John embraced the idea of being an “educer/educator” rather than an instructor, drawing knowledge and capability from within individuals and communities. His approach fostered confidence, skills, and lasting change.

In later years, John continued to contribute through civic innovation, supporting citizen participation in local decision-making processes, most recently evident in Napier’s first Citizen’s Assembly. Although now retired, he remains generous with his knowledge and open to meaningful dialogue. John Wise’s work has left a legacy of empowerment across Napier’s communities.