



Rural Youth & Adult Literacy Trust

Literacy Tuition for Rural/isolated Adults & Teenagers



Spring Newsletter 2025

Tēnā koutou katoa and welcome to our spring Rural Youth and Adult Literacy Trust newsletter of 2025!

Kia ora friends,

We'd like to start with an apology, this newsletter was meant to reach you in winter, but time has flown by and here we are already in spring! The past six months have been some of our busiest and best yet, with a wonderful number of new student leads and many positive steps forward.

We also have a big team update to share. After 20 months of dedicated service to our students and caring support for our volunteer Literacy Coaches, **Kaye Healey has sadly stepped down from her role as Student Coach Coordinator**. We're deeply grateful for her passion and care, she will be greatly missed by students, coaches, and staff alike.

At the same time, we're delighted to welcome **Linzi Gummer**, who has already stepped into the role with energy and warmth. Linzi has made a fantastic start, and we're excited about all that's ahead under her guidance.

Thank you for your patience with this delayed update, and for your continued support in helping us change lives through literacy.

Volunteer Coffee Meetups

This year, our volunteer coffee meetups have been a fantastic success, thanks to our wonderful Event Managers, **Nabian and Irina**, who organised gatherings in **Auckland and Hamilton**. **Christchurch volunteers—you're next on our list!**

A huge thank you to **Violets Coffee** and **Kawana Coffee House** for generously sponsoring the hot drinks at these meetups. Your support helped make these events extra special and gave our volunteers a chance to connect, share experiences, and celebrate the incredible work they do with the **Rural Youth & Adult Literacy Trust**. If you're nearby to North Shore or Franklin, Hamilton, please pop in and show them some love for these wonderful cafés that so kindly supported us.

Our meetups bring together volunteers from across all areas: **Literacy Coaches, Contact Centre Volunteers, Social Media Team members, and even our PowerPoint experts**, offering a rare opportunity for connection, especially for those who volunteer remotely.

Special thanks to **Irina Bakhmatova** for leading the organisation of these meetups and to **Jane Steel** for helping host the Hamilton event.

If you're a RYALT volunteer and haven't attended a coffee meetup yet, we'd love to see you at the next one! It's a relaxed, fun way to meet fellow volunteers and celebrate the difference we're making together.



Auckland Volunteer Meetup



Hamilton Volunteer Meetup

Volunteer Spotlight

We're excited to share a wonderful piece written by **Kaya Lal**, highlighting one of our incredible behind-the-scenes volunteers, **Ashvani Ninah-Gangadeen**.

Ashvani plays a vital role as our **Social Media Team Leader**, helping us share the story of RYALT and connect with our wider community.

Her dedication, creativity, and hard work make a huge difference, proving that behind-the-scenes volunteers are just as essential as those on the frontlines.

"It feels good to be part of something bigger than myself. I get a sense of accomplishment knowing I'm contributing to something meaningful."

Born in Trinidad and raised in Auckland, Ash has always been passionate about supporting others. While in high school, she began helping younger students with reading and writing, a formative experience that sparked her ongoing commitment to literacy and learning. She went on to complete a Bachelor of Ministry in Pastoral Care, studied counselling, and worked as a teacher's assistant supporting students with learning needs. She describes this role as challenging but incredibly rewarding.

Ash then moved to the Waikato where she completed her Master of Business Management and interned with the University's Employability Plus Programme. There, she helped lead social media campaigns and encouraged students to get involved in volunteering with Volunteering Waikato. This experience with content creation and volunteering eventually led her to RYALT. For the past year, Ash has volunteered with RYALT as a Social Media Coordinator.

In her role, Ash crafts engaging content, monitors engagement analytics, and helps plan and coordinate upcoming campaigns and community initiatives. She also plays a key role in keeping the social media team aligned, connected and motivated- ensuring everyone's perspective is heard and valued.

When asked about her favourite aspect of volunteering, Ash reflects on the meaningful connections she has formed and the inspiring passion she has witnessed from fellow volunteers. She shares that it has been incredibly rewarding to be part of something bigger than herself, which brings people together and empowers others through literacy and learning. For her, the experience has been rewarding, insightful, and most importantly, fun!

Beyond her volunteer work, Ash finds joy in art, painting, crafts, building small models, and spending time in the garden. She also values time with her family and continues to bring that same sense of care into everything she does.

RYALT is deeply grateful for Ash's dedication and contribution she brings to the team, helping us raise awareness and reach more people every day.



Volunteer Spotlight

Celebrating Mae Chang – Volunteer Recognition Award!

We're thrilled to share that **Mae Chang**, one of our dedicated RYALT Ambassadors, was recently honoured with a 2025 Volunteer Recognition Award from Volunteering Canterbury!

The award ceremony was a special event, attended by the Mayor, Phil Mauger, and Deputy Mayor, Pauline Cotter. Mae was one of 53 recipients recognised for inspiring volunteer work across Canterbury. She received a framed certificate and a beautiful New Zealand native plant to commemorate the occasion.

Mae reflected on the ceremony:

"There were so many different kinds of volunteer work being celebrated—it was really inspiring. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate and for recognising my volunteering work by nominating me."

We're so proud to have Mae on the RYALT team. Her passion, dedication, and advocacy for literacy make a real difference in her community every day. 🧡



Student Writing Booklet

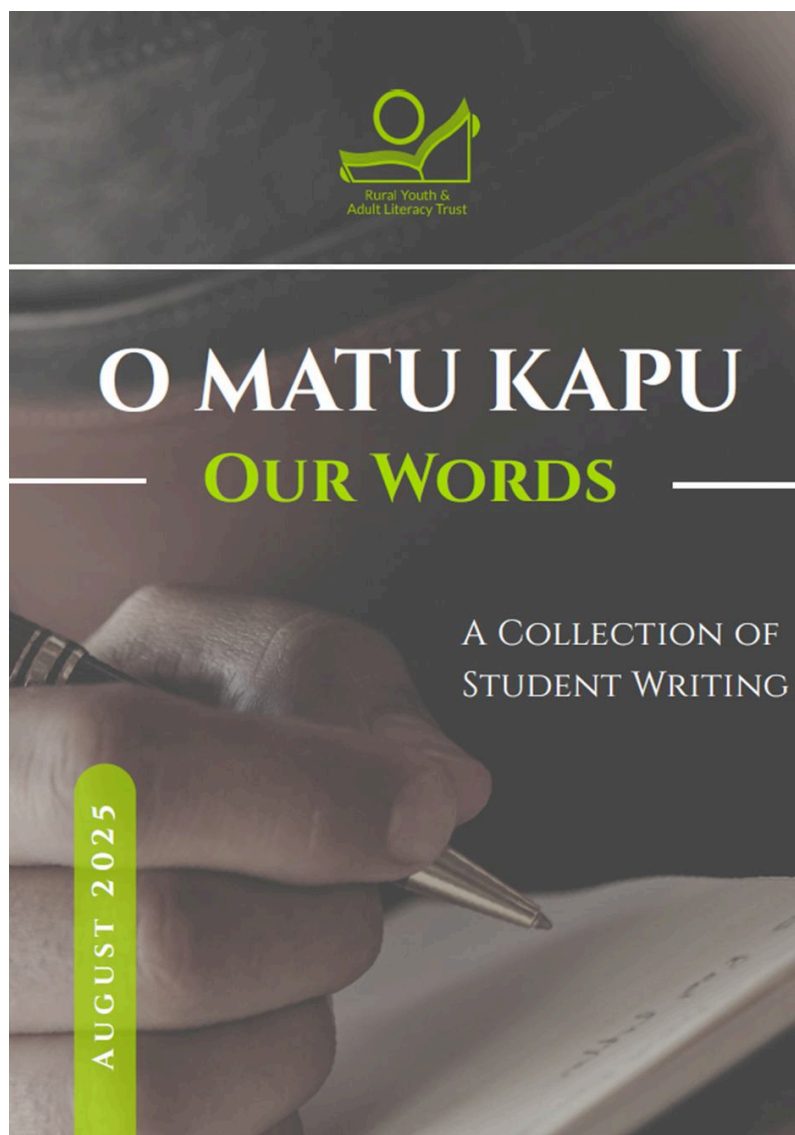
"Every word tells a story, and every story shows courage." 🌿

We recently celebrated the **Festival of Adult Learning**, a special time to recognise the power of lifelong learning and honour the incredible journeys of our students.

To mark the occasion, our **2025 Student Writing Booklet – O Matu Kapu | Our Words** has been published! Thanks to the generous support of **ACE Aotearoa**, we were able to print copies and post one to **every student and Literacy Coach** involved. We thank all the volunteers who helped to compile this book, particularly our Editor, Amanda Livingston, for the many hours she has dedicated to our student writing books over the years. Please click on the link to read the latest Student Writing Booklet.

<https://adulthoodliteracy.ac.nz/student-writing-2025/>

This beautiful collection showcases the voices of our students and celebrates their courage in sharing their stories with us all. 🌿



Outreach & Events

The past few months have been full of inspiring events, giving us the chance to share our mission, connect with communities, and celebrate literacy in action.

Over 60's Presentation

Jo and Lillian had the pleasure of presenting to a group of over 60's in Hamilton, highlighting what low literacy can feel like for people who struggle with reading and writing with some fun activities. It was wonderful to see such enthusiasm for learning about the positive impact our programs can have in the community.

Rural Women NZ Conference – Greater Waikato Region

On Tuesday, RYALT attended the **Rural Women New Zealand Greater Waikato Regional Conference** at the Jet Park Hotel, Hamilton Airport, a vibrant gathering of women passionate about rural community wellbeing.

From Christine Rankin's powerful reflections on leadership and resilience to updates from RWNZ President, Sandra Matthews, and Waikato regional leader Fiona Gower, it was clear that Rural Women NZ is deeply committed to uplifting rural communities.

At RYALT, we know that strong rural communities are built on individuals equipped to communicate, connect, and contribute. Events like this reinforce the importance of working together across organisations to ensure literacy, education, and opportunity reach even the most remote corners of Aotearoa.

Adult and Community Education (ACE) Conference – Christchurch

Kaye and Lillian also attended the **ACE Conference**, held in Christchurch in June, sharing our approach to adult literacy and learning. It was an excellent opportunity to network with other organisations, exchange ideas, and showcase how community-driven literacy programs can make a real difference in people's lives. This year's theme for the conference was Bridging Artificial Intelligence and Ancestral Intelligence. There were some amazing keynote speakers and interesting workshops.

Volunteers needed!

Make a Difference in Your Community
– Become a Literacy Coach!

Are you looking for a rewarding way to give back? Join the Rural Youth and Adult Literacy Trust as a **Face-to-Face Literacy Coach** and help adults in your area gain confidence with reading and writing.

We're seeking local volunteers in:

Te Puke, Rotorua, Kaiapoi, and Gore.

What you'll do:

- Meet with a learner at a local library on a day and time that works for both of you
- Help them improve their literacy skills and build confidence in their everyday life

No teaching experience? No problem!

We provide **full training, resources and ongoing support** to all our Literacy Coaches.

One of our volunteers, Linda, shared:

"The few hours I contribute each week have been the most fulfilling. I enjoy personal growth as a teacher, helping the community, and passing on wisdom and knowledge to others."

Extra support: Mileage reimbursement is available for those traveling to meet their student.

If you're ready to make a real difference, get in touch today. And please share this opportunity with friends, family, or colleagues who might be interested!

0800 891 339

admin@adulthoodliteracy.ac.nz

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." – Helen Keller



**Help others discover
the magic of reading!**

We're looking for volunteers for face-to-face literacy coaching.

✓ **Ongoing Training
& Teaching Support**
NO Teaching Experience Required.

✓ **Make a difference
in someone's life.**
Transforms your free time into
meaningful time

✓ **Flexible
Volunteering**
Meet with your student
at the local library

INTERESTED?

Message us, email admin@adulthoodliteracy.ac.nz or
call us on 0800 891 339 to find out more & get involved!



Team News

Welcome Linzi Gummer – Student and Coach Coordinator



Linzi joined RYALT as Student and Coach Coordinator in August 2025. She has a lifelong passion for learning and believes that brains, much like muscles, grow stronger the more we use them.

Over the years, Linzi has taught people of all ages, from babies to grandparents, and from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. She brings this wealth of experience to RYALT, supporting our coaches so they can create a nurturing environment where students feel confident to learn and grow.

Outside of work, Linzi loves spending time with her family, her three dogs, three cats, and three aquariums. Her love for people, animals, and nature keeps her grounded and reminds her of her purpose every day.

Linzi holds a B.Ed (Teaching), Diploma in Adult Education, and NCALE, equipping her with the skills and knowledge to make a real difference for our students and coaches alike.

Welcome to our new board member: Kopa Nanisi



Kopa was born in Samoa in 1947 and arrived in New Zealand in 1966, at the age of 19, stepping into a completely new life. Having lived mostly in rural Samoa, he had only ever visited a town a few times and had never seen a doctor. Although he had the chance to go to school in Samoa, he preferred learning from his pastor and his wife, who taught reading and writing in Samoan. When he arrived in New Zealand, he could not read or write in English.

Despite these challenges, Kopa showed remarkable determination. Within four years of arriving, he bought his first home in 1970, relying on his sister to help with the forms. Over the years, he worked in a variety of roles, including 15 years at the freezing works, three years as a bus driver in Hawaii, warehouse work at Johnson & Johnson, and later roles at Fletchers and Jimbo Petfood, until retiring at 73.

It had always been a dream of Kopa's to read and write in English. At the beginning of 2024, he joined RYALT as a student, embracing learning with the same determination that marked his life. His journey came full circle in June 2025, when he joined the RYALT Board of Trustees, bringing his experience and insight as a student to help guide the organisation.

Kopa's journey is a powerful reminder that it's never too late to learn, grow, and make a difference in your community.

Meet Our New Board Member: Steve Edwards



Steve Edwards brings a wealth of experience in both science and education to the Rural Youth and Adult Literacy Trust. He began his career as a scientist at Ruakura before moving into roles as a science technician and lecturer at Wintec, and later teaching at Pukekohe High School until 2019.

Alongside his professional career, Steve has dedicated over 12 years to volunteering with his family at Sunset Beach Surf Lifesaving. His commitment to service also led him to RYALT, where he started as a volunteer literacy coach before stepping into the role of trustee in June 2025.

Steve is passionate about the power of education, believing that without it, many doors remain closed to people. Outside of his professional and volunteer work, he is an avid gardener and enjoys the company of his new pet dog – who rarely leaves his side.

Thank You & Stay Connected

We're so grateful to all our volunteers, coaches, referrers and supporters who make the work of the Rural Youth & Adult Literacy Trust possible. Your dedication, time, and energy help change lives every day, and we couldn't do it without you.

Exciting news: we'll soon be moving to a **shorter, monthly newsletter format** to keep you updated more regularly with news, stories, and opportunities to get involved.

In the meantime, here are a few ways you can continue to support literacy in your community:

- Follow us on Facebook: facebook.com/RYALT
- Follow us on X (Twitter): <https://x.com/RuralLiteracyNZ>
- Follow us on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/ruralliteracynz>
- Follow us on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/ryalt>
- Share our posts to help more people discover the free literacy support available.
- Donate to support our programs and help us reach more learners across Aotearoa: adultliteracy.ac.nz/donate
- Word of Mouth: Tell everyone that you know about our free reading and writing support. You would be surprised at how many people know of others that struggle or are struggling themselves. The percentage of NZ adults that have literacy levels below those needed for everyday life has increased from 11.8% to 26% within the last few years according to 2023 OECD Survey of Adult Skills.

Thank you for being part of our journey!