



# Workshops for budding writers

It's not too late for aspiring writers to explore their writing talents with those who know how.

They can learn from the best at the Young Writers Festival which is on this week with workshops from poetry and songs to scripts and stories on across Auckland.

South Auckland songwriters get the chance to explore the art with an award-winning writer this weekend.

All workshops are being run by experienced writers, including singer and songwriter Tama Wai-

para, author Maria Gill, playwright Sam Shaw and poet Jai MacDonald.

Councillor Alf Filipaina, chair of Auckland Council's arts and culture forum says it's an exciting festival for young writers and will inspire them and give them the confidence to keep going with their passion.

Playwright, poet and community arts co-ordinator for youth at Auckland Council Courtney Meredith says there's a Canteen Creative Writing workshop for

young people living with cancer, as well as writing for Maori and Pacific youth and writing of the rainbow, with queer themes.

South Auckland writers can learn to write songs with APRA Silver Scroll finalist Sean Sturm at MIT Faculty of Creative Arts (room Z130), corner East Tamaki Rd and Newbury St, Otara, on Saturday from 11am to 3pm. The event is for people aged 15 to 25.

■ Go to [www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz) for a full list of events. Entry to all activities is free.

# Skydive raises confidence and the adrenalin

By **NICOLA MURPHY**

The views over Auckland are beautiful from 10,000 feet in the air. But the 50 young passengers on board Hercules C130 flights from Whenuapai airbase weren't paying much attention to the scenery.

That's because they were nervously preparing to jump out of the plane and freefall for 30 seconds.

The event was organised by Jump Start, a non-profit organisation that gives young people receiving help from other charities the chance to try skydiving.

The aircraft is usually only

used by the military for transport purposes. But it was made available on Sunday to give young people from CanTeen and Project K the chance to skydive.

CanTeen supports young people who have cancer and their friends and families.

Project K works to improve leadership skills and help teenagers reach their potential.

It's run by the Foundation for Youth Development Waitakere.

Cancer sufferer Amanda Beaton was one of five west Aucklanders taking the leap.

The 24-year-old has

Hodgkin's lymphoma.

She says the skydive was awesome but she was quite nervous while ascending in the plane.

"The guy I was jumping with was cracking jokes which helped. I was grateful for the opportunity," the Kelston resident says.

Kelston Boys High School student Regan Poi is part of Project K and also took the plunge.

"I was quite excited standing on the edge of the plane ready to jump," Regan says. "It was awesome, like nothing I've ever done before."

The 15-year-old says he's

lucky to have been chosen for the programme. Project K training manager Jane Edwards says Jump Start is about pushing the boundaries

because many of its participants have low self-esteem.

"This is about saying, 'well I've jumped out of a Hercules - if I've done that I can do anything,'" she says.

The tandem masters who did the jumps, air force staff and everyone else involved all donated their time and resources to the event.



**Big leap:** Regan Poi was one of five west Aucklanders to skydive out of an air force plane as part of a charity initiative last weekend. Photo: JULIE MAYNE



**Adrenalin-seeking:** Amanda Beaton was thrilled to get the opportunity to jump out of a plane. Photo: ROB PINE



# Pair skate the length of Thailand

By **CATE BROUGHTON**

**F**ormer Rangiora High School students Troy Bilbrough and friend Huw John are coming to the end of an epic 3500 kilometres journey through Asia – on their trusty skateboards.

The pair set out on January 15 from Pai Mae Hong Son in Northern Thailand and skated south to Chiang Mai. They continued south to Bangkok then headed for Phuket before going on to the west coast of Malaysia. They arrived in Singapore on March 15 after a tiring, intensive four days and 400km of skateboarding, in time for Mr Bilbrough's 22nd birthday.

With a long summer break available before Mr Bilbrough took up a role with KPMG in Auckland next month, he wanted to do something that involved all his interests and was inspired by fellow Kiwi skateboarder Rob Thompson, who skated 12000km

around the world.

"I love longboarding, travelling, eating delicious food and meeting awesome people so I combined those four passions and Skateventure was born," Mr Bilbrough said.

He recommended long distance skating as "an amazing way to travel".

"When you skate your connection with the elements is very strong; you feel every bump in the road, notice even the slightest change in gradient or surface, breathe the clean mountain air, taste the salty sea breeze and dodge the monkeys and snakes sitting on the road."

Both men have lost family members to cancer and decided to use the adventure to raise funds for Canteen, the cancer charity supporting teenagers with the disease.

Skating uphill was the biggest

challenge as well as food poisoning, blisters, mosquitoes, scorpions and a bleeding back from their backpacks rubbing against their shoulders, they said. Connecting with local tribespeople were the most memorable.

"In some towns the local hill tribes would give us water and bananas when we were exhausted and lost. In other villages families would invite us into their house for dinner and offer us a place to sleep," Mr Bilbrough said.

"I will always remember the looks of awe on the faces of the Thai Hill Tribes as we skated through their town. Most of them had never seen foreigners, let alone two foreigners on skateboards."

Mr Bilbrough said he was looking forward to hot showers, clean clothes and a comfortable bed on his return to New Zealand but will miss the skating life.



**Downhill Fun:** Troy Bilbrough, Huw John and friend Jes in Malaysia on their skateboarding adventure. **Inset (top):** Troy Bilbrough and Huw John with Thai army personnel in Northern Thailand **and (bottom)** Troy Bilbrough on an uphill skateboard climb in Thailand.



## Hawkes Bay Today

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# 10K red for good cause

It's a pricey bottle of plonk, but for a good cause.

A guest at a fundraising dinner paid a record \$9999 for a limited release Ngatarawa 2000 Centennial Magnum bottle of Merlot Cabernet.

The dinner, held in Auckland on February 27, was organised by the Auckland Chinese Community to celebrate the 2011 Chinese Lunar New Year marking the beginning of the Year of the Rabbit.

A special feature of the dinner was a fundraising auction for the victims of the Christchurch earthquake.

Mr Quan Chun Wang, Director of Noodle Canteen, paid \$9999 for the Magnum bottle donated by Alwyn and Brian Corban, proprietors of Ngatarawa Wines.

The Centennial magnum was bottled and released in 2002 to celebrate the Corban family's centenary of winemaking in New Zealand. Only 1000 magnums were produced. Other bottles auctioned did not fetch quite the same price but still helped raise more than \$18,900 for the Christchurch earthquake relief fund.



## STATE BEACH SERIES

# Beach series winds up with a real nail-biter

The final event of the State Beach Series saw a number of close races and one of those was in the 1km swim where Johanna O'Connor took line honours over series winner Brenda Russell.

Both athletes have had a number of successes during the New Zealand season.

O'Connor came first in the board rescues and

second in the surf race at the National Surf Life Saving Championships at Mt Maunganui.

Russell is leading the female elite section of the State NZ Ocean Swim Series with three top five placings.

"It's great to see these two girls go head to head each week in the swim and fantastic for other participants to track

their progress against two of New Zealand's leading ocean swimmers," race director Scott Rice says.

The beach series has one more event which is the CanTeen charity event tonight.

All entry proceeds go to CanTeen – supporting young people with cancer.

Entry is \$10 for under-

20 and \$20 for 20 years and over. Last year \$4000 was raised.

"The contribution our competitors make to CanTeen at this final event of the season is fantastic," Rice says.

■ Visit [www.beachseries.co.nz](http://www.beachseries.co.nz) for more information.



**Finale:** Tight competition between Brenda Russell, left, and Johanna O'Connor in the final round of the State Beach Series in Takapuna.

Photo: SAM MAYHEW



## Oamaru Mail

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### Teens to take leap

Fifty teenagers will jump out of a Hercules aircraft on Saturday, an experience the Air Force says will live with them for the rest of their lives. Members from youth charity groups CanTeen and Project K will take off in flights over the air force base at Whenuapai, reaching about 3000m before they leap out with a tandem jump master.



# CanTeen can-do

THERE were screams of excitement on the Wairoa River last Saturday as CanTeen members from the East Cape and Hawke's Bay branches water-skied for the first time.

CanTeen East Cape branch member liason co-ordinator Lianne Jenkins said they held an activity each month and this was the third year they had come to Wairoa.

Only one of the group had water-skied before.

Seven participants came from Gisborne

and 12 from the Hawke's Bay.

"The aim was to get them to experience things they might not have had a go at," said Jenkins.

Patients, siblings of patients or bereaved siblings were treated to the Wairoa Ski Club's boat, skis, experience and facilities from 11am to 3pm on Saturday.

Adult volunteers assisted the Gisborne and Napier members.

Wairoa Ski Club's Tresna Forrester instructed the skiers helping get them ready with water ski tips.



□ CanTeen members from the East Cape and Hawke's Bay branches make the most of the Wairoa Ski Club's generosity last weekend.



□ CanTeen member Sophie Higgins said the wake boarding was awesome on the Wairoa River last Saturday.