

■ Some of the Eastern Bay's leading businesses and community organisations were recognised with awards at the recent Horizon Energy Group's Business Excellence Awards. Today the *BEACON* talks to *Eastbay Reap*, winners of the Community, Not-for-Profit & Volunteer Excellence award.

Life-long learning drives team

Kathy Forsyth
Chief reporter

EASTBAY Reap's kaupapa is lifelong learning, community and development and its chief executive says the organisation is very much about empowering people through education.

The organisation took out the Community, Not-for-Profit & Volunteer Excellence award at the recent HEG Business Excellence Awards, and manahautū (chief executive) Ryan Morrison said the team felt very acknowledged.

"Even though we do like to just get on with things and be out there in the community when it comes to our learning programmes, it is nice to stop and be acknowledged. Everyone was feeling very appreciative on the night."

He said the awards evening was even more special because they shared the experience with many of the partners they worked with in the community sector.

"It really felt like something we were sharing with everyone in the room," he said of the award.

Eastbay Reap is celebrating 40 years this year and is one of 13 Reaps around the country.

The not-for-profit has between 75 and 80 kaimahi (staff) working across four sites in the Eastern Bay – Murupara, Ōpōtiki, Kawerau and its headquarters in Whakatāne.

"It gives a little bit of a local base in each community across the Eastern Bay and we work really hard to make sure that those people we do hire as tutors, facilitators and co-ordinators that they are from the community they are supporting so they know the right people and they genuinely want to make a difference," said Dr Morrison.

Lifelong learning means its kaimahi



EMPOWERING ALL: Eastbay Reap was recognised at the HEG Business Excellence Award for its work in the community and not-for-profit sector.

Photo supplied

work in the community through from early childhood to schools and youth and adults.

"We get to go out into the community and find gaps in learning and education and work alongside children, whanau, teachers, parents community members. We ask them, 'what do you want to learn?' and help them do it."

Eastbay Reap offers a multitude of programmes.

"In the early childhood space that can look like things like mobile and rural playgroups; so working with parents with children who aren't in early childhood but who we want to transition into that.

"We have the Hippy programme [Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters], a home-based programme where we take activities into the home for people with three- and four-year-olds to get them playing, thinking and communicating about what their children need to be able to do by the time they get to school.

"If we get it right in the early stages the stuff that comes after is much easier from a learning and development point of view for our kids."

Eastbay Reap's House of Science project provides primary school teachers with ready-to-teach science kits and is being taken up by more and more schools.

"They have got some really cool activities they can do with kids around things like climate change, wa-ter testing and environmental science and forensics."

Reap also runs an attendance programme where they engage with students who are not going to school. Other programmes work with at-risk youth, while an alternative education programme is offered to 16- to 18-year-olds.

"It gives us a chance to work with kids who maybe school is not a good fit at the moment. We take them off site, take them outdoors and do some funky things with them so we can peak their interests and start talking to them about what their pathways may look like.

"It builds confidence in big ways. We recently ran a dirt bike programme for girls.

"Some people may just see kids riding around on bikes, but it is actually about the safety and the discipline and the teamwork. It can really make a difference in those kids' lives and they may feel valued in a way they have not before."

Dr Morrison said professional development of teachers was another field they were involved in.

"In the adult community space we do a lot of work around literacy and life and work skills. We recently ran a writing workshop for 320 teachers."

Dr Morrison said Eastbay Reap had also undergone a period of growth and put a lot of energy into its organisational culture, team and sustainability.

"The awards night was also a recognition that that growth has been healthy growth and given us a chance to lead in things like sustainability and learning."

Educational opportunities important to new board member

Diane McCarthy
Local democracy reporter

KEN Bannan has spent most of his first month as a member of the Murupara Community Board in lockdown, but says he has hopes of making a difference to the area and look for ways to improve the area's educational opportunities.

"We love it. Everybody's very supportive of each other and everybody knows each other. It's been great during lockdown."

Mr Bannan was the only person nominated for the community board's Galatea-Waiōhau subdivision after the position was made vacant by the resignation of Shaun Bicknell, who left the district.

Nominations for the by-election opened on July 13 and closed on August 10. Since Mr Bannan was the only person nominated, he was declared to have been elected without the need for voting.

The board's vision is to empower and actively strengthen its communities, which include people living in Waiohau, Galatea, Murupara, Te Whāiti, Minginui and Ruatāhuna. Mr Bannan said his own interests lay in finding ways to support people to better themselves through education.

Originally from Christchurch, he began work as a forest ranger trainee in



Ken Bannan,
Murupara
Community Board
member

1967, which lasted four years.

"Then I spent 10 or 12 years as a forest ranger, mostly on the West Coast."

He met his wife, Penny, in Harihari where she was teaching at the district high school.

"With the encouragement of my wife, I decided to go to university to get a more formal qualification, so I studied extramurally for two or three years before going to the University of Canterbury for three years, graduating at the end of 1980 as what was classed as a forester. Being an older fellow, I was quite proud to come top of the school amongst all the young bucks and I ended up getting first-class honours."

In 1990 they moved to Rotorua, where they stayed until Mr Bannan's retirement.

"I started a business in Rotorua called Tenco, a log and timber exporter. I guess you could call it my seminal lifetime achievement – apart from marrying my wife, of course."

Though small compared to some of the larger companies such as Hancock and Kaingaroa Timberlands, he said Tenco was probably one of the largest independently owned timber and log exporters in the country.

"We export somewhere between a million and a million-and-a-half cubic metres of logs a year.

"We source most of our logs from independent growers, whether they're farmers or smaller-scale forestry operations all around New Zealand and we export from virtually every port. We started that in 1990 and we're still going strong."

He still holds the position of chairman of the board of the company while his son has taken his place as chief executive.

"In 2011 we brought a small farm in the Galatea-Murupara area because we thought we'd better have something to do when we retire, which I did at the end of 2014. Since then, we've built a house on top of the hill and we moved out here full time in 2016 and have lived here ever since. We're proper Galatea-Murupara folk now."

He said another important achievement for the couple was the setting up of the Bannan Science Foundation.

"It is a scholarship fund run through the Rotorua-based Geyser Foundation.

"We have this scholarship that is valid

for two students each time that covers them for the whole period of a tertiary education. They get \$5000 a year for three or four years, whatever is the term of their degree."

The scholarship is only for scientific study and is specifically for students from the Murupara, Ruatahuna, Minginui areas.

"We believe there is a crying need for people in this area to get support and to further their education. It's one of the most important ways of bettering yourself."

He said he also hoped to use his position on the community board to push for educational and training opportunities for people in the area.

"There is a whole lot of very experienced and knowledgeable people on the board now and I'm looking forward to learning from those people.

"They are longer-term residents and obviously some of them have their roots deeply in this community and it falls to me to learn what the social needs are, what the overall values of the community are, and pushing my education-is-a-good-thing wheelbarrow is where I'll be coming from."