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DECEMBER 2018



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Welcome to the new members of our alumni community from the Westlake Girls Class of 2018. We had an enjoyable leavers' function to finish the year and we were delighted to have former student Jenny Chu back to Westlake as the guest speaker.



Three of our former students were recently recognised by the University of Auckland in their '40 under 40' list which features prominent young alumni: Jenny Chu, Hala Nasr and Priyanka Shekar. Our congratulations to these Westlakers on their outstanding achievements. (*Jenny and Hala are featured in this newsletter and Priyanka's story will be in the April 2019 issue*).



For our senior academic prize-giving we welcomed Westlaker Dr Lynne Coleman MNZM as our guest speaker, and enjoyed hearing about her life and career as a GP and obstetrician and prominent sports doctor with national teams competing at Olympic and Commonwealth Games, including the 2016 Rio Olympics. (Featured in Alumni Newsletter 8, December 2015) - <https://www.westlakegirls.school.nz/alumni/>



*Our new Year 13 members of the Westlake Girls Alumni Community*

## Alumni Community

### Westlakers collaborate

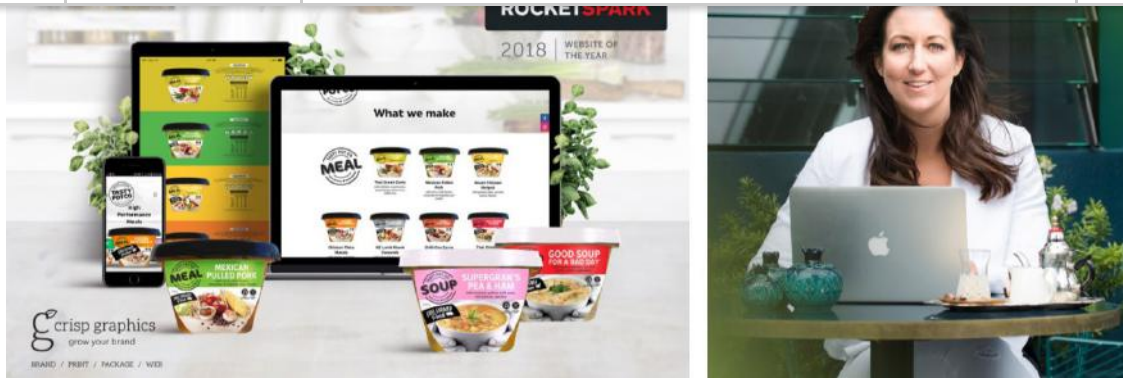
**Tonia Hill (Reid)**, Class of 1997, and **Natalie Vivian (Forsman)**, '93-95, re-connected recently, using their local networks and bringing together their respective skills. Both are now based in East Auckland (Ellerslie and Meadowbank) and run successful, award-winning businesses.

When Natalie Vivian, founder and director of Tasty Pot Co needed to redesign her company website she looked through her network and approached her former school mate, Tonia Hill. Tonia, a graphic designer, launched her company 'Crisp Graphics' 10 years ago.

It was a very successful collaboration with the redeveloped website recently winning 'Website of the Year' at the Rocketspark Design Partner Awards, voted on by 350 design partners across New Zealand and Australia.

Tonia's graphic design work with the Ellerslie Village website also received high praise and won an award.

Tasty Pot Co, which was launched in 2010 by Natalie and her husband, specialises in healthy ready-made meals, and has also won multiple awards for their products, including the overall Supreme Award at the NZ Food Awards after only three months on shelf, and the Healthy Food Guide Magazine 'Best Ready Meal 2016'.

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Tonia Hill of Crisp Graphics and the award-winning website

*It's great to hear of Westlakers collaborating in ways such as this, and we would love to hear of others finding Westlaker networks helpful in career or personal ventures. [alumni@westlakegirls.school.nz](mailto:alumni@westlakegirls.school.nz)*

### Reconnecting with a teacher: 30 years on

It was a pleasure to help with a re-connection recently between former student Kathy Kelly (Alexander), Class of 1985, and former Westlake teacher Lynda Cornfield (Ellis). Kathy is one of the Alexander quads who started at Westlake in 1981. Lynda was a teacher in the Science and Home Economics Departments 1975 - 1990. At a recent catch-up of a group from 3Cu 1981, Lynda's name was mentioned, amongst other teachers from that era. She taught Kathy how to sew.

Kathy now has a well-established curtain-making business in Hamilton and says, '*Ms Ellis was the teacher who had the most influence on my life*'.



Lynda has lived in Los Angeles for over 25 years, but is a regular visitor to NZ to see family and friends. She maintains a keen interest in Westlake and regularly meets up with former teaching colleagues. Back in NZ recently, she met up with Kathy again, calling in on a Curtain Workshop Kathy was running in Hamilton. Lynda says, '*The last trip was extra special, visiting Kathy and seeing her thriving 'Curtain Girl' business in Hamilton - we reversed roles and Kathy taught me how to use her commercial sewing machines!*'



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A group from 3Cu 1981



Form 3Cu in 1981

*The growing number of members in our Facebook groups is helping with connections such as this. There are now 3,400 members across all alumni year groups.*

***All our FaceBook groups are closed groups. The group links are at the end of the newsletter. The alumni year is your 5th year of high school, regardless of whether you attended for 5 years. So if you started in Form 3 in 1977 your alumni year would be 1981 (Form 7)***

## Events

### Past Events

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A group from the Class of 2008 met at Westlake in mid-November for a memorable catch-up 10 years on from Westlake. It's great to have two from that year on the Westlake staff now (Brooke Millar and Kim Dowden).

Particular thanks to **Brooke Millar** for her help in setting up and promoting this reunion. It was good too, hearing from a large number from that year who are living overseas and in other parts of NZ.

Over 60 more former students joined the 2008 Class FB group through the year, thanks to the efforts of Brooke and others who got on board to spread the word.



*The Class of 2008*

### **Class of 1998 20 Year Reunion**

A group from the Class of 1998 met in early November to celebrate their 20 year reunion. Thanks to **Karen Hobbs (Boyd)** for her role in organising this fun get-together. We are grateful for her taking the initiative and helping with planning and catering arrangements. Through the year, around 100 more former students connected through the Class of 1998 Facebook group.



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The Class of 1998

## Looking ahead to 2019

### Class of 1999, 20 Year Reunion 2019 - Save the Date!



When: Saturday 1 June 2019

Details to come: Keep in touch through your Facebook group [Westlake Girls Class of 1999](#)

Thanks to Anna Ashton, Katrina Hosken and Kate Grigg, Class of 1999

There will be other opportunities for alumni catch-ups during 2019. We would be interested in hearing from former students interested in helping set up decade reunions for Classes of 1969, 1979, 1989, and 2009. These are taking place regularly now and just need one or two from the year groups to help get things started.

We are also happy to welcome back small groups who wish to have a coffee and look around their old school. This may suit if one from a friendship group is visiting Auckland from out of town or from overseas and a few are catching up. Feel free to contact the Alumni Co-ordinator 021 151 5613 or [alumni@westlakegirls.school.nz](mailto:alumni@westlakegirls.school.nz).

# Alumni Updates

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### Scholarship for a recent Westlake graduate

Congratulations to Htoo Paw Thin, Class of 2016, who has recently been awarded a Sir Robert Jones Refugee Daughters Scholarship which supports young women from a refugee background to study at tertiary level. Htoo Paw's family came to New Zealand in 2000 after fleeing from the Burmese Junta when she was two-years-old. Htoo Paw was a Prefect and Onewa House Captain in 2016.

She is studying a Bachelor of Communications at Massey University in Wellington and the scholarship covers tuition and accommodation fees.

Htoo Paw says, *'Receiving this scholarship was a reminder of what myself and young women from refugee backgrounds are capable of achieving. It is testament to what hard work, perseverance and hope can do. I am determined to make it to the finish line, and through my writing, continue to be a voice for refugee representation and a strong advocate for social justice'*.



### AIMES Awards success

Former Westlake Girls students took out two of the major awards at the 2018 North Harbour Club AIMES Awards, each receiving a grant of \$15,000. They both performed at the AIMES Gala Dinner in late October.



### Natasha Wilson, opera singer, Class of 2011, 2018 AIMES Arts Award

Natasha credits her time at Westlake Girls as crucial for nurturing her love and talent for music. She says her involvement in Westlake's choirs – Key Cygnetures and Choralation – laid the foundations.

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mostly in classical voice. This includes touring in the ensemble in 'The Mikado' with the NZ Opera Company, and undertaking an emerging artist internship with the company.

The AIMES Awards funds will be used to help towards a one-year, post-graduate diploma in vocal studies at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

[Natasha Wilson video from Awards night](#)



**Sally Kim, cellist, Class of 2013, 2018 AIMES Music Award**

**Sally Kim** has recently completed her Bachelor of Music degree with First Class Honours at the University of Auckland, majoring in Performance Music (Cello).

She has loved being a chamber musician since high school and has won many competitions, including being granted the Pettman National Junior Academy's Special Scholarship in 2013, her final year at Westlake. This enabled her to compete in an International Music Competition in Padova, Italy.

Her ensemble, Trinity Trio, has performed in the St James Piccadilly in London, the Edinburgh Festival, and the prestigious Pablo Casals Festival in France, amongst others.

Sally will use the funds received from this AIMES Award towards costs associated with studying towards her Master of Music Degree at the prestigious New England Conservatory in Boston.

[Sally Kim – video from Awards night](#)

### **Our guest speaker from the 2018 leavers' function**

**Jenny Chu, Class of 2005**  
**2018 NZ Young Engineer of the Year**





Jenny Chu is the Engineering New Zealand 'Young Engineer of the Year' for 2018. She was also featured by the University of Auckland recently in their 2018 '40 Under 40' list as a prominent 'influencer'.

She is a Chartered engineer and an admitted Barrister and Solicitor of the High Court of NZ. She currently works as a Principal Project Manager on the delivery of the City Rail Link project in Auckland, having held engineering and project management roles in various infrastructure projects in NZ.

Jenny started at Westlake Girls as a Year 9 student in 2001, shortly after she moved to NZ with her family from Hong Kong. During her time at Westlake, she was involved in the school choirs as well as a number of sports teams including captaining the Westlake table tennis team in winning regional and national school championships.

She credited her father, and the maths and science teachers at Westlake with sharing their passion in their subjects and inspiring her career choice. Her interest in STEM was developed through various programmes in school and her participation as a Westlake representative in a national summer science and technology camp.

As a recipient of the University of Auckland Scholarship and Smales Farm Technology Office Park Scholarship, Jenny commenced a conjoint degree in Engineering and Law in 2006.

She has always had a strong sense of community involvement, volunteering as a Project K Mentoring Assistant through her high school years as well as a library assistant. In 2008, she co-founded 'Engineers without Borders New Zealand', a not-for-profit humanitarian engineering organisation and has remained in an active role in the group since then. With her extensive experience in humanitarian engineering work in the South Pacific and non-profit sector in NZ, she joined the Board of Directors of UNICEF NZ last year. In August this year, her contribution in this sector was further recognised by an Engineering New Zealand Auckland Centennial Award in Excellence in Humanitarian Service.

We congratulate Jenny on her successes this year. We were delighted to welcome her back to Westlake as the guest speaker at the 2018 Graduation function.

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*With Ms Merryl Hamling, one of Jenny's science teachers*

### **Hala Nasr Class of 2007** **PhD candidate Melbourne University**

Hala was recently recognised as one of the University of Auckland's prominent young alumni in their 2018 '40 under 40' awards.

Of her time at Westlake, 2003 - 2007, Hala says, *"High School isn't an easy time for any young person, but looking back, I feel that the seeds of curiosity and passion that drive my career now were planted during my high school years – through my 10PC peers and teachers like Mrs Clack and Ms Nasmyth. I once boldly told Mrs Clack that I would like to be the Secretary General of the United Nations, and her response was one of encouragement. I never felt any goal was too big. I will always appreciate what this approach to learning fostered for me personally."*



She completed a conjoint degree - Bachelor in Health Sciences/BA in Political Science at the University of Auckland. As she progressed through university she began to engage in her studies and clarify her aim to better people's lives through international development roles.

In 2013, she secured a role with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Egypt. As a second generation migrant, she relished the opportunity to connect with her ancestral homeland.

It was during this time that Hala discovered her passion for responding to and ending gender-based violence, and on her return to NZ, she pursued a Masters in Development Studies at the University of Auckland, focusing on activist and government responses to sexual harassment in Egypt.

Hala subsequently worked for two years (2016-2018) with the NZ Defence Force to help develop responses and policies to deal with sexual assault, including involvement in an award-winning Sexual Ethics and Respectful Relationships training that was mandatory for all service personnel.

Doing a PhD hadn't been part of her plans, but she was offered a new research scholarship for the SEREDA Project (Sexual and Gender-based violence against Refugees: Experiences from Displacement to Arrival) and is now based at University of Melbourne (School of Population and Global Health) as part of a multi-country research team (2018 – 2021).

She says, *"I never thought I would ever end up doing a PhD but at the same time it's a great opportunity to be working in this space particularly with the rise of movements such as #MeToo."*

Congratulations to Hala on being awarded this prestigious scholarship and we look forward to her next visit back to Westlake.

**Barrister and Solicitor, Doctoral candidate  
Class of 1993**



Adrienne Paul is studying towards her PhD, having received the 2016 doctoral scholarship at Waikato University worth \$66,000 over 3 years. Alongside her research, she has worked as a Māori mentor and law tutor at Te Piringa – Faculty of Law and as a note-taker for Disability Support Services for several years.

She is currently the Hearing Manager at Te Kōti Taiao o Aotearoa - Environment Court, Ministry of Justice, New Zealand, based in Christchurch and covering all of the South Island, and previously worked as the Advisory Team Member with the Māori Land Court in Christchurch.

Adrienne was inspired to undertake her research in Māori legal issues within the environment after being part of discussions around the *MV Rena* container ship disaster on Astrolabe Reef in 2011 and reporting back to the Te Patuwai Hapu Committee she was on.

Since 2017, she has been the Motiti Commissioner working closely with an Independent and Advisory Commissioner on issues involving the hapu on Motiti Island in the Bay of Plenty. Her PhD is investigating the cultural and environmental protection mechanisms in the 1991 Resource Management Act relating to the *MV Rena* oil spill disaster.

At Westlake, Adrienne was involved in the Multicultural Group, and its activities, including a cultural trip to Te Kuiti, prize giving and Polynesian Festival performances.

Her experience in the kapa haka group gave her a foundation in creating and maintaining real relationships in both her personal and professional life and she highly valued being a part of a close knit group together with great memories.

After leaving Westlake, Adrienne explored her Design and Arts knowledge base through completing Screen Printing and Computer Animation programmes before starting a family and having two children.

In 2008 she entered Law School at the University of Waikato and completed her Law Degree with a second major in Management Communication in 2012. This was followed by Professional Legal Studies and admission to the Bar as Barrister and Solicitor of the High Court of New Zealand.

She completed her Master of Laws in Environmental Mediation and Māori Corporate Governance at the end of 2014.

Adrienne views her journey as being very exciting, challenging and fulfilling.

*"When I was at Westlake I was unsure of what I wanted to become. However, Westlake gave me a foundation to start with in order to go out and explore what I truly wanted to pursue - without this foundation I believe I would not have pursued a legal career."*



# Looking Back

## Looking back to the '70s

Westlake students have been involved in community activities since its earliest days. Students from the '1973 Welfare Club' visited local rest homes and hospitals including the Lady Allum home, donating blankets they had made with knitted 'peggy squares' and putting on concerts.

*The Social Welfare Group 1973*



## Looking back to the '80s

*The 1988 Rowers*



## Westlake News

### Westlake success in Sculpture exhibition

Westlake Girls' students from Year 10 recently won the Angela Morton Secondary School Prize worth \$3,000 at the NZ Sculpture Onshore exhibition at Fort Takapuna in Devonport. The artwork focused on how we affect our marine environment.

The late **Angela Morton (formerly Angela Smith)** attended Westlake in the mid-sixties. She was passionate about New Zealand art. The Angela Morton Collection at the Takapuna Library is a reference collection of books and other materials covering the visual arts of New Zealand from pre-European times to the present day. The nucleus of the collection was funded from an original family bequest in 1985.



### Westlake farewells three long-serving staff members

#### Janet Welch HOD Languages

Janet Welch started at Westlake in 1985 and has been a teacher, Dean, and Head of Languages. She has been actively involved in a wide range of co-curricular activities at Westlake including various sports, Cultural Week activities and language related events such as the Goethe Society German competitions, and language exchanges.

She has seen many changes at the school - but one thing has remained the same. *"It's always great to see students, both current and former, doing well with their studies and progressing in their careers,"* she says. *"I'm especially thrilled when students make it to Germany, either on*



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Another constant has been her pleasure working in the Languages Department. *"I have particularly enjoyed working with my talented colleagues over the years,"* she says.

Along with paddocks and mooing cows at Smales Farm, another strong memory was a suspicious fire in the former staff room (now M9). *"The staff moved into the senior students' common room (now the canteen) and some shipping containers were moved onto the site outside the gym for teachers to work in,"* she says.

Janet is looking forward to more time to read, catch up on German films and travel. *"During my time at Westlake I've met many wonderful students and colleagues to admire and remember. Westlake provides a rich environment with so many opportunities for young women to grow up in."*

We wish her a long and happy retirement.

#### **Christine Weeks HOD Career Education**



Christine started relieving at Westlake 1995 - 1999, before taking on a part-time then full-time role from 2002. Her roles have included being Gateway Co-ordinator, Dean, HOD Career Education, Pacific Student mentor and TIC Exchange Students.

Christine will be well known to many students over the past few years, as they sought advice on tertiary studies and career options. *"I've particularly enjoyed seeing some of the Gateway students gain employment or an apprenticeship and begin their careers,"* she says. *"I've also loved being involved with the Pacific students and watching the pride they have representing our school at Polyfest."*

She was involved extensively in the sporting life of the school. As TIC of the school's Water Polo programme for 11 years, she managed the Senior A and Junior A teams. She also traveled to Nationals with the Touch team one year, and managed the Premier Netball team for three years. She has enjoyed trips to Australia with the Water Polo team and to America to attend the World Scholar Athlete games.

*"Having a competitive nature, one of my biggest highlights has to be when the Water Polo team won the National title when I was the manager."*

*"It has been a privilege to be a part of the Westlake family and seeing how the students and staff support each other and take pride in each other's achievements."*

We wish her a long and happy retirement travelling around NZ with her husband in their caravan and spending more time with her grandchildren.

#### **Yoko Raike HOD Maths and Statistics**

Yoko Raike is leaving Westlake after 19 years as a teacher, Acting HOD Mathematics, and HOD



She has many fond memories. *“It’s been wonderful having the opportunity to see students reaching high attainments in Maths. Seeing those students who found Maths challenging succeed with persistence and hard work, was equally wonderful and a delight.”*

She says, *“My friends and time at school are a part of who I am now. Thank you very much for letting me share your time at Westlake Girls High School. It has been a true privilege.”*

Yoko is planning “refreshment leave” for next year with no set agenda. We wish her a long and happy retirement.

## Alumni Association Update

Westlake Girls Alumni

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