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December 2020

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Hi everyone,

We hope that you have all kept well and safe through the challenges of the year, wherever you may be.

We wish you all a relaxing festive season and best wishes for a happy and more settled New Year.

In this end-of-year newsletter, we include alumni updates of former students who have published books, (Cheyney McDonnell and Ghazaleh Golbakhsh), those who have returned to Westlake to speak at the Graduation function (Nava Fedaeff) and Prize-giving (Marisa Fong), a prestigious research fellowship (Hayley Reynolds), and a new coaching appointment at The Breakers Basketball team (Chanel Pompallier).



Alumni Community

LinkedIn

The Westlake Girls LinkedIn group has now connected with **3,000** alumni in an increasingly active and useful professional network:

[Westlake Girls LinkedIn Group](#)

Facebook groups

The Facebook group links are at the end of the newsletter. The alumni/peer year is your Year 13 / Form 7 year of high school, regardless of whether or not you attended for those 5 years. For example, if you started in Form 3/Year 9 in 1983, your alumni/peer year would be the 'Class of 1987'.

Events

Alumni Events

Westlake High School Founders Group

The Founders Group had a reunion lunch in July, with 40 attendees from the co-ed group. Thanks to Robin Reid for organising the function held at the Bays Club in Browns Bay. It is hoped to make this an annual catch up and Robin is working on a date for early next year.

Details will be on the Facebook Group, and we will also email those on our database.

[Westlake High School Founders \(WBHS and WGHS\)](#)



A group at the founders' lunch

Alumni class reunions planned for 2020 were postponed because of the uncertainty around Covid-19 alert levels. We are certainly hoping for a more settled year ahead, so if there is interest in decade get-togethers from the classes of '71, '81, '91, '01, '11, please get in touch and we can work together on reunion ideas.



[Class of 1971 Westlake Girls](#)

[Class of '81 Westlake Girls](#)

[The Westlake Class of 1991](#)

[Westlake Girls Class of 2001](#)

[The Westlake Class of 2011](#)

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**Westlake Girls Class of '90
30-year reunion (a year late!)
Saturday 20th March, 2021**

Venue: Westlake staffroom for a welcome drink and tour of the school 3.30 - 4.30pm
Continue the catch-up at Fantail and Turtle, Smales Farm for dinner.

Thanks to Jane Knox and Nikki Horne.

[Westlake Girls Class of 1990](#)

**Westlake Girls Class of '95
25-year reunion (a year late!)**

Plans are underway for a get-together in 2021. Communication will be in the FB group soon.

Thanks to Carrie George.

[Westlake Girls Class of 1995](#)

Alumni Updates

Alumni updates

Scholarship Breakfast

Thanks to former students from the Class of 2019 who attended the 2020 Scholarship Breakfast and passed on suggestions to the 2020 NCEA Scholarship candidates. *From left, Lilli Pritchard, Sophia Deghani, Emma Ormsby, and Hala Barakat.*



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with current students. **Eryn Crombie**, Class of 2012 and **Emma Scowcroft**, Class of 2009.

Eryn (pictured below right), has a BBus and spoke with students on her role in brand strategy, marketing and communications. Emma (below left) shared aspects of her role as a chartered accountant and Finance Manager.



Alex Brookbanks, Class of 2012 (pictured left), was guest speaker at a recent Year 13 assembly. She had an encouraging message of resilience for the students, drawing on her passion for helping others, with her experience as a paediatric nurse, her work for Habitat for Humanity, and volunteer worker in aid and health projects in Fiji and Colombia.

Leadership Panel

We welcomed back three former students as guest speakers on our Leadership Panel as the end of year function for Prefects. Sam Scott, Jennah Wootten and Dayeon Lee (pictured L-R) shared their stories of life at Westlake, and their career progression since they left high school.



Sam Scott (MNZM) Founder and Artistic Director of Massive Company. Her 34-year career has involved directing theatre, television and film. She founded Theatresports In Schools in 1990, and was a Shortland St Director from 1998- 2007. Massive Company makes new work for theatre and specialises in developing emerging artists and making sure they are valued as fabulous practitioners.

Jennah Wootton, Class of 2003, is General Manager Partnerships and Communications at Sport New Zealand, with extensive experience in leading and delivering commercially successful mega events. She was Chief Executive of the highly successful World Masters Games and has worked on some of Auckland's most high profile events.

Dayeon Lee, Class of 2014, is a graduate of the Bachelor of Health Sciences majoring in Population Health at the University of Auckland. She is now completing her Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery, working to combine her degrees toward a career in global health development rooted in medical expertise. Dayeon currently works part time as a Health Economics Research Associate at Health Economics New Zealand. Her work experience is largely research-based in the areas of health services, policy and economics.

Year 13 Leavers' Graduation

We welcomed **Nava Fedaeff**, Westlake Class of 2006, back to Westlake as guest speaker at the 2020 Leavers' Graduation function.



Nava gave an interesting presentation about her route to her current role as a Forecaster and Science Communicator with NIWA, from her own Leavers' function in 2006, when she was undecided about her pathway after Westlake, like quite a number in the graduating group.

Following a gap year, she completed a BSc at the University of Auckland, then an Honours Degree in Geography, with volunteer conservation projects in Costa Rica and Thailand giving her further experience in the field. When she joined NIWA in 2014 as a Climate Scientist she was the youngest at that time.

Now, nearly 15 years on, and following further specialised study in the UK in Operational Meteorology, she is working in a field that encompasses her interest in geography and the environment, as well as her love of art, visualising data and creating digital content in a large range of projects in and out of the studio.

Nava was also recently acknowledged as NIWA's Science Communicator of the Year.

2020 AIMES awards successes

Congratulations to **Olivia McNeill**, Class of 2014, and **Lina Kim**, Class of 2015, who have won major awards at the 2020 North Harbour Club AIMES Awards.



Olivia McNeill, a violinist, won the AIMES Music Award and a cash grant of \$15,000. She has long harboured a wish to study and play music in Germany, inspired by a school exchange to Munich in 2012, and a tour of Europe as concertmaster of Westlake Symphony and Chamber Orchestras in 2014. This year, she was selected for a prestigious Masters Music Programme at the University of the Arts in Bremen.

At Westlake, Olivia was a leading musician in Symphony and Chamber Orchestras for 5 years and was part of the NZSO National Youth Orchestra from the age of 13.

She completed a BA, majoring in German Studies, and a BMus (Hons), in Violin Performance at the University of Auckland, and was Concertmaster of the University Symphony and Chamber Orchestras, along with winning a number of musical prizes.

Olivia will use her AIMES grant towards her study in Germany. With the 2020 gala concert being live-streamed this year, Olivia tuned to watch her old orchestral groups perform.

Lina Kim, Class of 2015, won The North Harbour Club Ross Finlayson Award for Community Leadership.



Lina was fully involved in school life throughout her years at Westlake, participating in premier debating, MUNA, tutoring programmes, drama productions, and Choralation choir, as well as leadership roles as Board of Trustees representative and House Captain.

Currently in her final year for a BA/LLB (Hons) at the University of Auckland, Lina has been President of the Auckland Law Students' Society (2019) and was also selected to represent New Zealand youth on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs funded research trip to South East Asia.

Other achievements include being Student Representative on the Legal Research Foundation and leading the Auckland Ambassadors Programme for UN Youth Auckland. Currently Lina is working as a Law Clerk at Russell McVeagh and as a Graduate Teaching Assistant at the

University of Auckland.

Recently she co-founded an entity called PĀUA, a mentoring initiative that aims to facilitate cultural conversations at workplaces in New Zealand.

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)**Marisa Fong**

Entrepreneur, Director, Mentor



We welcomed Marisa Fong (pictured above), from the Class of '81, as guest speaker at this year's prize-giving.

Marisa was an engaging speaker and shared her journey, along with advice for the senior award winners. Marisa developed an early interest in business and entrepreneurship after finishing her Year 13 studies at Westlake. In 1998 she co-founded Madison Recruitment, growing it into the largest privately-owned recruitment company in NZ, selling it in 2013 in a landmark sale.

Since then, she's gone on to become an angel investor for a number of businesses; she's a member of Flying Kiwi Angels, NZ Asian Leaders, Institute of Directors, Entrepreneurs' Organisation and Global Women; and is heavily involved with Professionelle, an organisation set up to help women throughout their careers. She sits on the board of publicly listed IT company Enprise Group, and is a trustee of Simplicity Kiwisaver. Recently, she has created Arné, an international skincare start-up with an anti-pollution focus.

Marisa remembers her Westlake years fondly, with some memories of an inspirational English teacher, Ms Hall, and the compassion of principal, Ms Helen Ryburn.

'Ms Hall was my English teacher. She was inspirational. I remember a comment she wrote in my report after passing 6th Form English with a reasonable grade despite some patchy attendance. "Maximum result with minimum effort". A credo I have seemed to follow ever since!

She adds, 'Because of the school, and the female empowerment I experienced, I have always been a supporter of women and proudly call myself a feminist.'

We are delighted to have re-connected with Marisa, as one of Westlake's distinguished alumni.

Congratulations to Westlake authors

Ghazaleh Golbakhsh, Class of 1998 and **Cheyney McDonnell**, Class of 2004

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collection of essays focusing on the immigrant experience growing up as an Iranian - New Zealander, and the effect of the collusion of cultures.

Ghazaleh, a writer, film maker and academic has an MA in Screen Production and studied screen writing at the University of Southern California. She has written various short films which have screened internationally and is currently developing her first full-feature screenplay with the NZ Film Commission.

She is undertaking PhD studies at the University of Auckland and is writing a variety of film and television projects.

[Further information on the book.](#)



Cheyney McDonnell is a Graphic Designer, author and illustrator. She has written and illustrated her first book – an interactive picture book aimed at 2 - 5 year olds, titled 'Thank you for Feeding Freckle'.



She completed a Bachelor of Design and Visual Communication at Massey University and a Post-Grad Diploma in Secondary Education and Teaching at AUT and has been working as a graphic designer for over 11 years.

Reflecting on her time at Westlake, Cheyney says, *'I made some life-long friends at WGHS, I lived for lunch times where I could catch up with all my friends. I wasn't too into sports or academia back then. My time was mainly spent in the art block, particularly in 6th and 7th Form*

[Further information on the book](#)**Alumna is new MP - Naisi Chen**

Congratulations to Westlaker, **Naisi Chen**, Class of 2011, who is a new list MP for Labour 2020. She enters parliament as one of the youngest new MPs, at 26 years of age. (*The only other Westlaker parliamentarian we're aware of was Jenny Kirk MNZM (Labour – Birkenhead, '87 – '90).*)

At Westlake, Naisi was very involved in cultural activities including Symphony and Chamber Orchestras and Concert Band, and was active on the Cultural and Chinese committees.

Since then, she has completed a BA/LLB, has a Business Consultancy, sits on various Boards, including Foundation North and Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, and is the Vice President of the youth wing of the NZ Labour Party.

Reflecting on her Westlake days Naisi said, *"I am very grateful for the dedicated teachers and staff who made high school such a wonderful experience for me. It was a crucial five years that shaped me into who I am today. I received a very wholesome education from Westlake and will work to ensure that girls after me will receive those same opportunities as I continue to fight for fair opportunities for all."*

We hope to have the opportunity to welcome Naisi back to Westlake.

Prestigious Health Fellowship for alumna**Dr Hayley Reynolds, BE (Hons), PhD, Westlake Class of '99
Biomedical Engineer**

Our congratulations to Westlaker Dr Hayley Reynolds on being awarded a Sir Charles Hercus Health Research Fellowship from the Health Research Council of NZ.

This prestigious award supports her cancer research for four years at the Auckland Bioengineering Institute (ABI) at the University of Auckland. Her research is focused on developing precision cancer tools for melanoma, breast cancer and prostate cancer to improve the treatment of patients.

Hayley attended Westlake Girls 1995 – 1999. She says,

'I enjoyed my time as a student at Westlake, even though it seems like a long time ago now! I

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Girls and Westlake Boys High Schools financially supported my brother Wayne (a former Westlake Boys student) who died of leukemia in 2005 at the young age of 17. He is a significant part of the motivation behind the cancer research I am doing now.'

Hayley gained her Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Engineering Science in 2004, followed by a PhD in Bioengineering in 2009 focussed on melanoma, both from the University of Auckland. She continued with post-doctoral research into breast cancer at the ABI before moving to the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne in 2011, where she focussed on prostate cancer research.

Hayley has received a raft of awards and grants including a North Harbour AIMES Award and MacDiarmid NZ Young Scientist of the Year Award in 2006, a Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia Movember Young Investigator Grant from 2014 - 2018 and a National Health and Medical Council of Australia Project Grant from 2017 - 2021.

After more than seven years in Melbourne, Hayley settled back in Auckland in 2019 with her husband and two young children and is now a Senior Research Fellow at the Auckland Bioengineering Institute at the University of Auckland.

Chanel Pompallier, Class of 2002 Assistant Coach, NZ Breakers Basketball team

Chanel Pompallier, Westlake Class of '02 has been announced as an Assistant Coach with the New Zealand Breakers in Australia's National Basketball League for 2020-21. She has been working with the Breakers junior programme for the past 5 years and was awarded the Blackwell Community Cup for her work as Community Coach in 2019. It is an historic appointment for a female to join the senior coaching team for the Breakers.



Chanel played in the Premier team at Westlake High School from Form 3. In Form 6 (Year 12) she gained representative honours playing in the NZ U18 team, North Harbour National Women's team, and North Harbour and Basketball North U18 and U20 teams where she captained the team to a National Championship. She then headed to Texas, USA, to take up a Junior College sports scholarship.

Chanel says, *'During my years at Westlake I was fortunate enough to play for both the Premier Basketball and Netball teams. Having the different dynamics of the two sports and team cultures taught me how to mature and be organised in both sport and my schooling at a young age.'*

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organisation in either sport and knowing I am where I stand today makes all the sacrifices, endless hours alone in the gym and time away from family and friends so much sweeter.'

Early in 2020, this year's Premier Basketball team was treated to an intense coaching clinic with Breakers coaching staff, Chanel and Rashid Al-Kaleem, the session gifted to them by the 'Friends of the School', Oporto Restaurants and the Parents Forum.



Chanel (left) with the Westlake Premier Basketball team 2020.

Looking Back

RUGBY AT THE SCHOOL - ABOUT 1990

The team made do with rugby jerseys passed on from the Boys School.

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An epic tour of the South Island in 1970



A wonderful trip for 33 senior students in the August school holidays, with travel on the overnight train from Auckland to Wellington, a ferry crossing on the *Maori* to Lyttleton, a 7-day bus tour in the South Island and then the reverse trip.

Westlake News

The Thorburn Debating Trophy



Congratulations to the Westlake Girls Premier Advanced Debating team which won the Thorburn debating trophy against Westlake Boys in October this year, the first win for the Girls School since 2012.

The Thorburn Trophy is our longest-standing inter-school trophy and has been hotly contested in the lively annual debating contest against Westlake Boys each year since 1970. It was presented by Mr Derek Thorburn who was on the Westlake High School Board of Governors for several years from 1957, as a Parent Representative.

The current points tally for this trophy sits at Westlake Girls 28 wins to Westlake Boys 23. With over 50 years of this great rivalry to celebrate, we hope to involve alumni in a combined debating event late 2021.

Westlake Virtual Gala Concert 2020

For most Westlake musicians the Gala Concert in September was both the first and last concert of the disrupted year.

For the lucky 100 parents in the auditorium it was a wonderful night of music from all Westlake choral and orchestral groups. Many hundreds more took the opportunity to attend virtually with a live stream of the concert.

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A selection from the hundreds of comments from Friends of Westlake Music during the streaming.

Hello from Germany! Awesome performances so far and can't wait to hear the rest (ex-student on music scholarship)

The talent in the WBHS auditorium is mind blowing!! Very emotional as we have missed these beautiful sounds in this crazy 2020!! (a Westlake parent who was in the small live audience)

We are watching from Forrest Hill. So near and yet so far. Thank goodness for live streaming!!!

From Manila with Love. Yuhooo!!!! Cantare!!!!

Great set! Thoroughly enjoyed listening to that here in London! Well done Cantare!

Awesome as always! I miss you all, love from Nova Scotia! (a former WGHS staff member)

Watching from Zimbabwe

Congratulations to Friends of Westlake music and concert band. Good afternoon from ROME ITALY TO ALL NEW ZEALANDERS.

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As an ex-pupil from 1957, I feel very proud tonight

So lucky to see this from the USA

Thanks so much for sharing this, my mum is watching from the UK and should have been here in NZ. She's so happy to get to watch it from the other side of the world.

Alumni Association Update

Westlake Girls Alumni

Westlake Girls LinkedIn Group

Westlake Girls Class of 1966

Class of 1967 Westlake Girls

Westlake Girls Class of 1968

Class of 1969 Westlake Girls

Class of 1970 Westlake Girls

Class of 1971 Westlake Girls

Class of 1972 Westlake Girls

Class of 1973 Westlake Girls

Class of 1974 Westlake Girls

Class of 1975 Westlake Girls

Class of 1976 Westlake Girls

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Class of 1978 Westlake Girls

Class of 1979

Westlake Girls Class of 1980

Class of '81 Westlake Girls

Westlake Girls 1978 - 1982

Westlake Girls Class of 1983

Class of '84 Westlake Girls

Westlake Girls Class of 1985

Class of '86 Westlake Girls

Class of '87 Westlake Girls

Westlake Girls Class of 1988

Class of '89 Westlake Girls

Westlake Girls Class of 1990

The Westlake Class of 1991

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Westlake Girls Class of 2002

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Class of 2005 Westlake Girls
Class of 2006 Westlake Girls
Westlake Girls Class of 2007
Westlake Girls Class of 2008
Class of 2009
Class of 2010
The Westlake Class of 2011
Class of 2012
Class of 2013
Class of 2014
Class of 2015 Westlake Girls
Class of 2016 Westlake Girls
Westlake Girls Class of 2017
Westlake Girls Class of 2018
Westlake Girls Class of 2019
Westlake Choralation Choir Alumni
Westlake Girls Key Cygnetures Choir alumni
Westlake Symphony Alumni
Westlake Girls Alumni Australia
Westlake Girls Alumni UK
Westlake Alumni Korea
Westlake Girls Rowing Alumni
Westlake Boys Alumni Page (Westlakers)



Westlake Girls High School

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