

# Haley Strickland Project K

Project K played a big role in how Haley Strickland became the Community Champion in Aotearoa's capital, Wellington. Working at Z Energy for the past 6 years, she is committed to making a positive impact in communities that align with her personal values.

Haley attended Taira College in Lower Hutt where she was picked to participate in the Graeme Dingle Foundation's programme, Project K back in 2004. Hanging out with the popular group, not necessarily caring about what others thought she had one goal and that was to be seen as a 'cool kid'. Finding school easy, she often found herself being led into making bad decisions which meant Project K came into her life at a time where she was heading down an unpleasant path.

Project K allowed Haley to learn more about herself as she was taken out of the "real world" and into the wilderness on a life-changing adventure. Gaining self-awareness, drive and new friends, Haley also achieved a tertiary scholarship through the First Foundation which she believes would not have been possible without Project K.

Haley's mentor had a very successful marketing career with a lavish lifestyle which was different to what Haley had been previously exposed to. It gave her the opportunity to see a different life path and decide whether that was something she may want or not. Her mentor put the ball in her court by letting Haley organize when they would meet rather than the standard every two weeks. This taught Haley responsibility which helped her understand her emotions and when she felt as though she needed to reach out.

Haley not only enjoyed but took value from the programme so much so that she became a Project K mentor herself. Her experience as a mentor was different to what she went through as a mentee and felt as though her student was not quite ready to make the changes she needed to make. "This is a constant reminder that different things matter to different age groups and even though we don't think they matter now, they really do matter to them," she says.

One of the biggest takeaways for Haley was "not underestimating the potential impact you might have on someone, and that impact may not be realised for some time so be committed to the long game." She says this because the effect of Project K on her own life wasn't something she truly realised until years later when she was able to reflect on the programme and think about what could have happened had she not been chosen and made the decision to participate.

Haley knows those who are committed to positive social outcomes through programmes such as Project K can help young people who were in the same situation as she once was. Her advice for those interested in becoming a mentor is: "if you are committed to it and you're committed to the long-term outcome then it's really, really worth it!"



**We want every child to know: What they have inside is greater than any obstacle.**