

# Scholarship recipients share stories

ŌPŌTIKI Community Health Trust had two of its scholarship recipients present at a recent annual general meeting, sharing their stories around their “why” for undertaking their health training.

Mereana Morgan and Crystal Parata are both in the third year of training this year, and the trust hopes they reapply for scholarships in the coming round.

The trust was set up in 1996 because the Ōpōtiki Hospital was closing and the then Bay of Plenty District Health Board gave compensation to the Ōpōtiki people.

This lump sum was put into the trust, which is a community trust run by a trustees – four appointed by Whakatōhea, three elected community members, one trustee appointed by the health authority and two appointed

from among healthcare providers.

The trust covers the whole entire Ōpōtiki district and its purpose is to promote and improve community health standards and use its funds to facilitate and/or improve the provisions of medical services, health care, disability services and any other health services.

Traditionally, this has been carried out through educational scholarships and grants with one round each year.

However, at the beginning of 2023, the trustees created a new strategic direction for the trust.

While providing educational scholarships and health provider grants was its “business as usual”, it wanted to delve deeper into its purpose for the good of the district.

It asked the questions: How can we improve, do better the purposes of

the trust? And what does our district really need? The two questions set out its strategic strategy for the next five years.

As a result of its strategic planning, the trust is moving into more advocacy for local health services as it tries to highlight the cuts in services within the district to those making the cuts.

The trust said these were becoming too frequent, especially under the Government and Health NZ Te Whatu Ora had slashed many services within the district to cut costs.

“All of this has such devastating effects on our primary and secondary health provisions within Ōpōtiki,” the trust said.

“We believe we must be outspoken in our concerns while trying to offer possible solutions in certain instances.”

made is to work towards reinvesting its capital with the Eastern Bay Communities Foundation and this will occur following the signing of a memorandum of understanding.

Within its business as usual, the trust granted three scholarships in 2024 to local women undergoing their tertiary health education.

Two nurses in training and one doctor in training each received \$8000 scholarships.

Applications are also coming in for 2025 scholarships. These are retrospective scholarships where applicants apply for reimbursement of their fees for the year they have just successfully completed.

The closing date for this year’s round of scholarships is March 31.

Application forms are available at [www.ochealthtrust.org](http://www.ochealthtrust.org)