



# Making a positive difference at Manurewa High School

The KickStart Breakfast Student Champion Award recognises students who have shown an exceptional and outstanding commitment to their KickStart Breakfast Club. This year's award – which includes a \$3,000 study grant – was presented to Sulani Helg of Auckland's Manurewa High School. This is her story.





**Meet Sulani Helg.** At just 16, the Year 12 student at Auckland's Decile One Manurewa High School is already running their KickStart Breakfast Club. And on the morning we visit, it's immediately clear what an outstanding job she does every morning of the school year. Before we even see the Breakfast Club, we hear it – from the laughter and buzz radiating from inside, and the uplifting Pacifica music playing through the loud speakers. Sulani and her team of student leaders make sure it's a happy and welcoming place to be.

**“This is a place for them to come and eat, share a laugh with friends, meet new people, and just enjoy being at school. Playing music here helps maintain that positivity within our environment.”**

That positivity radiates from Sulani through her team of student leaders. Year 13 student Kaybe Kaufusi Otukolo, says 'It's important for our Breakfast Club to be fun and positive, because at our school we want a lot of positive people. We like to see students having fun.' Leading by example, Kavee describes his main job within the Club as 'welcoming all the students and putting a smile on their faces.'

As we step inside the Breakfast Club, two things are quickly apparent. Firstly, it's extremely well organised. As students of all ages and a wide mix of ethnicities file in, they're met with Sulani's warm smile, and a long table already well-stocked with Sanitarium Weet-Bix and Anchor Milk that they help themselves to. The second thing we notice is that there is no one over 18 in the Club! It is 100% student-led, with no obvious teacher involvement. That's very much by design, as Principal Salvatore Gargiulo explains: 'It's students supporting each other, which is a significant part of what our students do throughout our college community. Senior students take the lead, then have a lot of junior students who come in and

support them.' For Sulani, it meant that as a fresh Year 9 student, she 'saw the prefects helping out at our Breakfast Club, and they sparked my passion for enriching the lives of others.' Four years later, it's now Sulani who is a constant source of inspiration to those around her. Says Kaybe 'Sulani has some skills that I have learnt from – like talking to people. Before, I was a really shy person and I couldn't talk to anyone – and she encouraged me.'

Sulani's advice to other schools who are setting up a KickStart Breakfast Club is to start by encouraging a lot of the student leaders. Because by doing that, 'it will immediately encourage more students who want to come in and help.' Beyond that, the keys to success are routine, and 'maintaining your positivity to motivate your peers.' Her advice to fellow students is to 'follow your heart and get involved. The thing you get out of it is the fact you have contributed to feeding your peers, helping them improve their results, and the whole process of giving and you shall receive.'



*Student leader Kaybe taking time out to enjoy breakfast with fellow students.*





*Working up a healthy appetite. Manurewa High School has a diverse roll of 2000 students.*

Ask Kavee what he's gained from participating in his Club, and he's quick to point out how much it's shaped him. 'I'd like to work with youth, so I'm probably going to leave school... and come back and help out at this Breakfast Club! All I can say is I've learnt a lot of leadership skills by helping.' That's a sentiment echoed by Fonterra's Carolyn Mortland. 'The wonderful thing about the KickStart Breakfast Programme is that, as well as nutrition, it's a real opportunity to develop leaders amongst the students. They need to take a lot of responsibility – it's about commitment, respect for their peers, and general leadership skills that they get to develop.'

So how will the bright, positive and extremely capable Sulani apply the leadership skills she's honed from her KickStart Breakfast Club? The day after we visited the college to see her humbly receive the Student Champion Award, she was elected by students and staff to be the college's Head Prefect – a title that will sit comfortably with her ongoing seat on the school Board of Trustees as student representative. And when her student days are complete, she's very clear where she wants to head.



*Sulani's proud parents Gerry and Susie at the surprise special assembly where Sulani is presented with her award.*



**“I'm very grateful to the KickStart Breakfast partners for the study grant that comes with this award. I plan on using it towards my university fees, where I want to study Public Policy and Pacific Island Studies. One of my biggest aspirations is to work for the UN, as my passion continues to be to enrich the lives of others.”**

So file this story away for safekeeping, and refer back to it in around 20 years. Because with the leadership skills and positive outlook Sulani has honed through running her KickStart Breakfast Club, we believe she's destined for big things on the world stage.

# KICKSTART Breakfast



*Sulani receiving her award from Fonterra's Carolyn Mortland.*

If you would like to join the KickStart Breakfast Programme or find out more about entering the KickStart Breakfast Awards, visit our website or call the KickStart Breakfast Team.

[www.kickstartbreakfast.co.nz](http://www.kickstartbreakfast.co.nz)

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