

# Monthly Newsletter

03 March 2026

# Volunteer

## Great Lake Taupō

Celebrating Service Through Community ... here's what has happened in the last month and what's to come!

At **Volunteers Great Lake Taupō**, our focus is on the organisations that serve our community — and the people who give their time and energy to make those services possible.

As we move into 2026, our role has evolved ever so little, as we build on the strong foundations already in place by the remarkable Julian Bishop, who we also celebrate today.

We'll be adding clarity and structure to our strategic direction, and of course doing our best to continue delivering consistent support across **Taupō, Tūrangi and Mangakino**.

In a region like ours, volunteering matters **BIG TIME**. It supports families, protects our environment, strengthens emergency response, and keeps community life moving.

Each month, we will highlight one volunteer — not as the centre of attention, more as a way of recognising the organisation and wider team behind them.



Individual stories help us see the shared commitment that creates real impact. When we volunteer, we all add value. It also helps us see how We too can contribute. We ALL Count !!!

This month, we play a little catch-up and celebrate two volunteers, including one with more than 20 years of service.

We know there are many more long-service veterans out there ... who have given and given ... and we Salute You All !!!

Thank You ... and please help us celebrate you by telling us your story. It's worth telling. In doing so, we celebrate long-term commitment, the organisations that enable it, and the spirit of volunteering across our community.

In this newsletter you can expect:

**Celebrating Volunteerism in Tūrangi, Mangakino & Taupo**

### JANUARY

Volunteer of the Month - **Wicked Weeders**

### FEBRUARY

Volunteer of the Month - **Lake Taupo Volunteer Fire Brigade**

**Child Cancer FOUNDATION Appeal**

**Emergency Services Day 2026 Kaimanawa Reserve**

**Julian BISHOP** - Thank You and new Role

# VOLUNTEER of the MONTH - January 2026

Volunteer  
of the Month  
January



Wicked Weeders



Volunteer  
Great Lake Taupo

## Wicked Weeders - Greening Taupo - Kids Greening

*Wicked Weeders are a passionate group of locals who support **Greening Taupō** by getting out each Tuesday to care for planting sites across the district. They revisit **Greening Taupō and Kids Greening Taupō** projects, releasing native plants from weeds, undertaking careful weed control, supporting community planting days, and handling the smaller finishing touches that ensure long-term success. Their consistent mahi is vital.*

*Without ongoing care, many restoration sites would struggle to thrive. Through steady effort and practical expertise, the **Wicked Weeders** help transform planting areas into resilient, flourishing spaces of biodiversity. They are a strong example of how a small, committed team can make a lasting difference to Taupō's environment — and inspire others to get involved.*

### Nick Bradford

Nick has been a dedicated volunteer with the **Wicked Weeders** since the group was established in 2015. He is a true cornerstone of the team and a wonderful example of the **Greening Taupō's volunteers**.

Over the years, Nick can be our poster figure for the **Wicked Weeders**, not only for his commitment but also for his good humour (including his unofficial role as morning tea taste-tester, with a particular speciality in fruitcake!).

Nick's passion for the environment is genuine and longstanding. He regularly supports **Greening Taupō** planting days, regularly joins in with the **Wicked Weeders on Tuesdays**, and also volunteers with **Predator Free Taupō** to check a trap line at Opepe to protect native biodiversity.

Nick adopted one of **Greening Taupō's** restoration sites on the corner of Wairakei Drive and Huka Falls Road (The Hub), originally planted in 2015. Since then, he has consistently cared for the site, removing weeds, infilling with additional native plants, and nurturing it into a thriving, healthy forest.



Nick is a familiar face most Tuesday's, arriving with his trusty grubber to tackle weeds with determination. He is also always there on the set-up days before community plantings - unloading and laying out the plants and then returns with the team afterwards to finish off any mulching, staking, and checking on all the young natives.

While this nomination recognises Nick and his outstanding personal contribution, he would be the first to say he is part of a wider team. His dedication shines a light on the incredible work of the **Wicked Weeders** volunteers who generously give their time to restore and care for Taupō's environment. We're grateful for this opportunity to share with you our passion.

Tremains

# VOLUNTEER of the MONTH - February 2026



## Lake Taupo Volunteer Fire Brigade - a tradition of Service in Taupo

Volunteering in Aotearoa has deep roots. Since 1854, when the first volunteer fire brigade was formed, communities have stepped forward to protect one another — a tradition that continues today.

In Taupō, the Great Taupō Forest Fires and the Ballantyne's Fire reshaped regional fire protection. From that period came stronger structure, and the Lake Taupō Volunteer Fire Brigade became central to protecting forests, homes and businesses. As Taupō grew, so did the Brigade. Today, supported by **Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ)**, volunteers train to national standards, use modern equipment, and work alongside professional crews — proudly volunteer-led and community-backed.

## Mike Bush - 25 Years of Commitment to his Passion

2026 marks 25 years of service for Mike “Bushy” Bush as a fully qualified **New Zealand Volunteer Fire Fighter**. Since joining in February 1985, he has seen the Brigade evolve — though one thing has remained constant: a desire to give back. For Mike, it's not about recognition; it's about reliability.

With a 97% attendance record over 25 years, his commitment reflects pride in the team and the role they play in protecting Taupō. He places strong emphasis on mentoring the next generation, regularly sharing practical “*Pearls of Wisdom*” at weekly assemblies — quiet leadership grounded in standards and service.

Mike describes the Brigade as an “inversed triangle,” focused on those delivering frontline response. That shared approach is evident each time volunteers and professional crews arrive and operate as one coordinated team.



**Editor's note:** Mike is also coaching **Taupō's Kirsty Parsons** toward completing the 2026 Ironman, her first triathlon, supporting her determination to *Live her Life to the full*, and compete while living with cystic fibrosis.

Recent weather events across New Zealand, and the **Taupō-nui-a-Tia** fire, have again shown the importance of **volunteer emergency services**. From frontline response to recovery support for schools and families, volunteers remain central to community resilience.

The **Lake Taupō Volunteer Fire Brigade** is one example of how long-term, structured volunteering strengthens a region. It is built on people like Mike — and sustained by the collective effort of many. Our Taupō community is stronger because of its volunteers. Every contribution counts. Every person matters.

**Ngā mihi to all who serve.**

**Tremains**

# EVENTS & Announcements



## Child Cancer Street Appeal 2026

13 & 14 March

Mitre 10 MEGA Taupo

Join us in making a difference for Kiwi kids with cancer and their whānau. **Mark your calendars**, the **Child Cancer Foundation's Street Appeal** is back in 2026! And we need your help more than ever!

Date: Friday 13 and Saturday 14 March  
Location: **Mitre 10 MEGA Taupo**, 99 Bella George Lane, Hilltop, Taupō 3379  
Shifts available: Friday 13<sup>th</sup>: **12h – 14h**  
Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>: **08h – 10h | 12h – 14h | 10h – 12h | 14h – 16h**

We're seeking volunteers for a two-hour shift to collect donations for Kiwi kids with cancer and their families. Our Street Appeal is our largest annual fundraiser, and your support is essential. Every dollar raised helps provide vital support during an incredibly challenging time.

We need to raise \$6.5 million each year, and with no direct government funding, we rely on the generosity of volunteers and our community to make it possible. Have questions or need help? Contact us in **TAUPO** with **Carol Burton** [carol.burton@xtra.co.nz](mailto:carol.burton@xtra.co.nz)  
Thank you so much for your support and we hope to see you in March !

Join us for an action-packed day showcasing the incredible work of our emergency services! Watch live demonstrations – see **Fire and Emergency NZ, NZ Police, Greenlea Rescue Helicopter, and Hato Hone St John Ambulance** in action as they perform a vehicle extrication!

Check out the displays – meet the teams from **Land Search and Rescue, Coastguard, Taupō District Civil Defence, and the Harbourmaster.**

*Food and drinks – grab a sausage from our gold coin donation. BBQ, supporting Hato Hone St John.* Don't miss this exciting and educational day for the whole family!



**Our Oxygen** *Every Volunteer Program requires financial support from our Capability Enablers and Sponsors, to our Members & Donors*  
**We THANK YOU for your continued support**



Te Tari Taiwhenua  
Internal Affairs



**GREAT LAKE TAUPŌ**  
Taupō District Council

**Tremains**



**MiF**  
Malcolm Flowers Insurances Ltd  
Insurance Brokers

## Julian Bishop - Thank You ... and thanks for being You !

Julian has moved up, onto the VGLT Board, and his help in facilitating the transition has been, frankly, invaluable.

Today, we salut you too ...and below we share the communication announcing Julian's move



**Ed Note:** I chose this image because, for me it represents Julian so well - smiling, representing a fabulous cause, and always with his 'arm around somebody'. Julian is a **Giver**. I've only known him a few weeks, and I'd struggle to find a better way to describe him. Thank You, Julian ...

### **A New Chapter for VGLT – Leadership Update**

*Kia ora koutou. I'm writing to share an important update with our valued volunteer organisations and partners across the district.*

*After almost three years serving as Operations Manager for **Volunteer Great Lake Taupō**, I have recently stepped into a governance role as a Trustee on the VGLT Board.*

*It has been a privilege to work alongside so many passionate organisations and volunteers, and I'm incredibly proud of what we have built together.*

*From strengthening connections to celebrating volunteer impact across our district, it has always been about empowering our community. While my day-to-day involvement is shifting, my commitment to volunteering in Taupō remains strong.*

*From the Board table, I will now be focused on governance, strategy, and ensuring VGLT continues to grow in a sustainable and community-focused way.*

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*I'm also very pleased to formally introduce **Phillip Purvis** (he prefers **Phil** ... hint hint) as our new Operations Manager. Phil brings fresh energy, strong leadership, and a genuine commitment to community development.*

*Phil is already stepping confidently into the role and is looking forward to connecting with each of you, understanding your needs, and continuing to strengthen the support VGLT provides.*

*Our mission remains unchanged - to advance, strengthen, and celebrate volunteering across the Great Lake Taupō district. Together, we will continue to make volunteering accessible, enjoyable, and fulfilling for everyone in our community*

*Over the coming weeks, Phil will be reaching out to introduce himself personally and to ensure a smooth transition. I know you will make him feel as welcome as you have always made me.*

*Thank you for your ongoing partnership, trust, and the incredible work you do every day. Volunteers are truly the lifeblood of our community, and it is organisations like yours that make Taupō such a connected and generous place to live.*

*Ngā mihi nui & Thank you for reading*

**Julian Bishop, Trustee**