



# Our Legends.



Ashburton College netballer Ally Thomas in action last season. Mid Canterbury Netball has scored a goal well before the 2026 season, with news a \$95,000 grant is coming their way.

## Keeping Harold at schools



Rangitata National MP James Meager with the famous Harold the Giraffe, a key component of the Life Education Trust Mid and South Canterbury, which visits 67 schools and over 8000 students across the region each year.

## Funding lift for local netball

Mid Canterbury Netball says a \$95,000 grant is “absolutely huge” for the game locally. That’s what centre manager Erin Tasker said about the near \$100,000 grant approved by the Braided Rivers Community Trust and the Lion Foundation. “We’re super appreciative of the support we receive from the Lion Foundation and the Braided Rivers Community Trust,” Tasker said. “Any support we can get financially has a direct impact on our participants, as it means we can keep the cost of playing netball as low as we can.” The grant will contribute to the centre manager’s salary, insurance, Netball New Zealand affiliation fees and indoor court hire at EA Networks Centre, which is one of the association’s biggest annual costs. “We are so lucky in Mid Canterbury that all of our

netball activity now takes place indoors. Gone are the days of numb, purple fingers trying to catch a netball outside early on Saturday mornings,” Tasker said. “But, playing indoors does come at a cost and court hire is one of our biggest expenses each year. If we didn’t receive funding like this, we’d have to pass the cost on to our players.” Tasker said that was a real concern at a time when many families were under financial pressure. “We know that with the cost-of-living times are tough out there for some families these days and if sport is too expensive it may well be the thing that has to give.” The funding will also allow the centre to maintain high quality competitions and programmes across all grades, which was something Tasker said “we’re so proud of”.

A \$30,000 funding boost has been described as a “godsend” for Life Education Trust Mid and South Canterbury. That’s the word from Life Education Trust Mid and South Canterbury part-time administrator and promotions co-ordinator Jill Merritt at what she called an “amazing” grant from the Braided Rivers Community Trust and the Lion Foundation. Merritt said the funding support was crucial to keeping the mobile classroom operating. “We rely on two and a-half salaries every year just to keep operating. So, the grant was a godsend.”

classroom, air-conditioned, heated and fitted with digital learning tools, has travelled from school to school, bringing lessons on health and wellbeing directly to students. The programme covers five key strands: self-esteem, food and nutrition, body knowledge, social relationships and substances, helping children understand their bodies and make healthy choices. For the little ones, the programme is often associated with Harold the talking Giraffe to help promote their messages and lessons.

The trust employs two educators, alongside Merritt’s part-time role, delivering programmes to students aged eight to 13 across Mid and South Canterbury. “There are 67 schools that we go to in South Canterbury and Mid Canterbury as well. “Our educators see over 8000 primary school aged children per year. We have 18 schools with less than 50 children: 27 rural schools and 33 urban schools. Since 1991 the mobile

Merritt said the greatest reward for the team was the impact on young people. “The educators just have a real passion for children,” she said. “They’re teaching life and health skills, how to deal with bullying, learning how to say know with confidence with peer pressure that comes into it.” The sessions also deliver anti-drug and anti-vaping messages and address growing challenges facing young people. “Mental health is also such a big thing now, too.”

LION FOUNDATION GRANTS, JANUARY	
The Big Little Theatre Company.....	\$6,300
Ashburton Rowing Club.....	\$22,400
Hampstead Rugby & All Sports Club.....	\$40,700
Ashburton Car Club.....	\$46,000
Life Education Trust Mid & South Canterbury.....	\$30,000
ME/CFS Canterbury West Coast Charitable Trust.....	\$6,700
Mid Canterbury Netball.....	\$95,500
AshburtonCollege.....	\$80,995
Ashburton County Scottish Society Pipe Band.....	\$7,000
Ashburton Swim Team.....	\$10,556
Hakaterere Youth Sports Club.....	\$30,286
Filipino Dairy Workers NZ.....	\$5,555
<b>Total January grants.....</b>	<b>\$381,991</b>

BRCT QUICK RESPONSE GRANTS, DECEMBER	
Mid Canterbury Federation of Women’s Institutes – 700	
Ashburton Bird Club – \$500	
Neville Bendsorp – \$250	
Ashburton Community Christmas Lunch – \$1,066	