



# New Zealand Federation of Graduate Women CANTERBURY BRANCH

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## NEWSLETTER JUNE 2014

### July Branch Meeting

This year the mid winter lunch will be held on **Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> July at 12pm at the Chateau on the Park, Kilmarnock St**

If you are coming would you please let Enid Smith know by **Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July**. Her contact details are: phone 358 9492 or email [aesmith2@clear.net.nz](mailto:aesmith2@clear.net.nz)

### REPORT OF LAST MEETING

Although the attendance was much smaller than in previous years, those who came enjoyed hearing from the following selection of our very talented award winners.

**Emily Peach** whose area of study is Forensic Linguistics. This is an emerging internationally recognised science and is used to support evidence in criminal investigations.

**Petrena Fishburn** who spoke on artist Barbara Brooke's contributions to the Canterbury art scene in the post-war period.

**Anisha Dayaram** whose research is focused on using new metagenomic sequencing techniques to identify novel viruses that cannot be cultured.

**Paddy Gibson** who is studying antibiotic resistance and an important source of this which is under-reported

is called adaptive resistance. It is caused by chemicals in the environment that are usually not intended to be used as antibiotics, but nevertheless cause a response that raises a bacterium's tolerance to antibiotics until the chemical is removed.

**Hannah Franklin** who is studying the interaction of NZ native plants with soil nitrogen. She has investigated their growth response and nitrogen uptake, as well as their modification of soil nitrogen in the root zone.

**Simona Seizova** whose Honours project involves understanding how *V.erythrospora*, an estuarine algae, adapts to hypo-osmotic changes (e.g. the fluctuation of fresh water) and how sodium plays a role in this mechanism.

**Roseanna Gamlen-Greene** whose area of study focuses on streams surrounded by current and extinct sea bird colonies in order to follow the marine nutrients they bring, from the soil to the riparian plants and up the freshwater food web.

**Sarah Askey** spoke about the Arts and Crafts movement and its utopian ideals in which art, beauty, work and well-being are all intertwined.

Some photos of the evening are on the back page of this newsletter.

## **TRUST BOARD REPORT**

The Trust Board met on 21 May 2014 to discuss donations and employment and will not meet again until 2 July 2014.

### **Donations**

The Trust Board met to discuss our educational, general charitable and arts donations for the 2013/14 year. The Strategic Plan for the Board identifies that one of our goals is effective grantmaking. The board should achieve this by remaining responsive to the changing environment in education and developing partnerships to ensure grants are used to best effect in our achieving our vision. The recommendation from the Branch Committee as representative of our major stakeholder that the focus of our giving be on education, welfare, women and children echoes our vision.

The actual amount of spending has not been discussed fully for this financial year so we were guided by historical data and current income to determine the amount to spend. A “spending rule” will be discussed as the Board develops its budget and confirms the budget for the Academic Dress Hire Business. Our aim in giving at this meeting was to benefit as many as possible within the above parameters.

### **Academic Dress Hire Employment**

In line with our strategic goal to delegate responsibility for the operational management of the academic dress hire business to a business manager the Board offered a contract to Jean Sharfe for this position. Jean will be running the business within the parameters set by the Trust Board.

### **Two Conference Travel Awards were awarded**

Maree Shirota will be attending three UK venues presenting a paper and being a visiting instructor. The paper is 'Kings Myths and Ancestry, A C15 Genealogy.

Caralyn Purvis will present a paper at the Scientific Study of Reading Conference in Santa Fe – The Effectiveness of Reading Comprehension Strategies targeted at Adult Students with Literacy Weakness.

*Ellen McCrae Trust Chair*

NZFGW Fellow Lakshini Mendis is the runner-up in a recent writing competition run by HDBuzz (which is an excellent resource for those wishing to keep up with Huntington's Disease research). Her article on work being carried out on the toxic mutant huntingin protein (mHTT) can be found at:  
<http://en.hdbuzz.net/165>

*You are warmly invited to attend the  
Christchurch Awards Ceremony of the*

**New Horizons for Women Trust**  
**Saturday June 21st 2014, 2.00 – 3.30pm at Te Ao Mārama, University of Canterbury**

This building is the location for Aotahi - School of Māori and Indigenous Studies and the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Research.

Entrance via Arts Road off Clyde Road – see  
<http://maps.canterbury.ac.nz/home/browse/1174>

We will be presenting Second Chance Education awards to Alice Downie and Sandra Macfarlane. They are both

Bachelor of Social Work students at CPIT.

This ceremony is jointly hosted by PACIFICA Christchurch Branch and the Zonta Club of Christchurch South

Refreshments will be served  
For catering purposes please RSVP by Monday 16 June to  
[rosemary.duplessis@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:rosemary.duplessis@canterbury.ac.nz)  
or text/phone: 021 02243825

### **NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN REPORT**

I attended the branch meeting and Annual General Meeting in May. Lia de Vocht is continuing in the role of Branch President. The guest speaker, Sionainn Barnes, President of the UC Feminist Society, spoke about *Fourth Wave Feminism – the Personal Really is Political* and the work of trying to reconcile diversity with effective change. It was good to hear a young woman – very much a “mover and shaker” - talk about mutually beneficial networks and acknowledge the older women in NCW as role models and teachers, while asking us to trust young women feminists. They produce a magazine *What She Said* which they want to brand as creative and positive, not critical.

*Marlene Smith NCW Representative*

### **FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE**

Engineering is the application of scientific, mathematical, economic and practical knowledge in order to design and build a structure, machine, device, system, material or process. It has been around since the Middle Ages, and has diversified into many different specialisations namely; civil, chemical, biomedical, mechanical, electrical, environmental, software/computer, aerospace, and military engineering. In 1912, Elisa Leonida Zamfirescu was formally

recognised as the first woman to receive an Engineering degree from the Royal Academy of Technology in Berlin<sup>1</sup>. Today, more than a century later females are still severely underrepresented in the field of engineering. In 2013 IPENZ reported that only 13% of professional engineers in New Zealand are female and that 23% of students enrolled in engineering degrees are female<sup>2</sup>.

As undergraduate engineering students in our final year we have not only seen the lack of women in this industry, but sadly we form part of the worrying statistic. In order to change the current statistics by gaining a greater representation of women in engineering two key areas need to be addressed; attracting young girls to choose engineering as a career and of equal importance retaining and advancing women as professional engineers. Given our experiences our discussion will include only the former.

A study completed by the Canadian Association for Girls in Science found that the low number of girls choosing Science Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM) related careers is largely due to the stereotyping of STEM careers as masculine careers and peer, parental and social attitudes and expectations influencing young women’s career choices. The report also notes that “it is difficult for many to appreciate how pervasive and powerful, yet subtle and unconscious the effects of stereotyping are in influencing attitudes, expectancies, cognitions and motivations of females to pursue academic studies and a career in STEM, or not”<sup>3</sup>.

Worryingly the findings of the report came as no surprise to us, in fact we realised that what we had experienced throughout our scholastic upbringing was in fact “normal” for most girls interested in STEM related subjects. With the exception of my parents we come from a very conservative family

and upbringing. Throughout school the careers suggested to us were in the areas of medicine, teaching, law or business because those were the careers of choice for “bright young ladies” as they would put it. Please do not mistake us, all of those careers are worthy and good in their own right for both male and females, but for us – we wanted something different. We wanted something that incorporated both mathematics and physics, something that was practical and intellectual, and something that challenges the norm and can solve some of the greatest problems the world’s is facing – providing clean water for an ever increasing world population, reducing air, water and terrestrial pollution and finding alternatives for fossil fuels to name a few. When we asked the boys in my class what they wanted to do when they leave school we were amazed at the range of careers they were able to choose from. Careers we had never even heard of! Which brings us to what I believe is the fundamental problem that has to be addressed in order to attract a larger number of girls interested in STEM related careers: information and support.

We believe stereotypes exist due to lack of information and it is this lack of information that leaves room for further stereotypes. It is an endless cycle that has historically, and in some areas today been left unbroken. If young girls are given information about all the available career paths and then, most importantly, supported but their families, peers and community regardless of their choice stereotypes will no longer hold any ground. We realise that this is idealistic and realistically prejudice towards females in these areas will continue for some time, however increasing initiatives from universities, engineering bodies and governments suggest that change is on the horizon.

## References

1. Biography: Elisa Leonida Zamfirescu. Enciclopedia României.  
URL:  
[http://enciclopediaromaniei.ro/wiki/Elisa\\_Leonida\\_Zamfirescu](http://enciclopediaromaniei.ro/wiki/Elisa_Leonida_Zamfirescu)
2. Women in Engineering: Snapshot 2013. IPENZ Engineers New Zealand, May 2013.
3. Barriers to Women Entering the Engineering Profession. IPENZ Women in Engineering, T. Ayre, 27 October 2011.

*Provided by Lindi & René Engelbrech: Rene graduated with BE(Hons) with first class honours in Materials & Process Engineering last year and is now working in industry. Her sister Lindi is currently completing the BE(Hons) in Chemical & Biological Engineering and heading in her sister’s footsteps. They both received the Waikato branch of NZGW’s prize for the leading woman student in Year 3, plus a host of other awards, too many to name!!*

## **NZFGW Awards May 2014**



*Trust Board Chair Ellen McCrae presenting a certificate to Simona Seizova*



*CFGW Award winner Simone Templeton with her young daughter and friend Stephanie*



*Branch members enjoying supper*



*CFGW Award winner Paddy Gibson*



*Disclaimer: while every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of information in this newsletter, neither NZFGW Canterbury Branch nor the editor accepts any liability for any errors of fact or opinion*