

# Local women up for NZer of Year

TWO local women with a passion for the preservation and restoration of the environment are contenders for the New Zealander of the Year Award. Rae Te Nahu and Kay Baxter were each awarded a Kiwibank Local Hero award, for their efforts in the community.

**Rae Te Nahu and Kay Baxter were among 10 people nominated in the Wairoa-Gisborne region.**

At a ceremony in Gisborne last week 10 nominees from the Wairoa and Gisborne regions were recognised for their selflessness and community contribution. The 10 were among 292 heroes celebrated at 16 regional ceremonies.

Kiwibank chief executive Paul Brock said the awards recognised the everyday people who continued to give back to their communities.

“Their selflessness and contribution make other Kiwis better off.”

Ten semi-finalists will be selected from the total number of recipients to go forward for the New Zealander of the Year Award.

The 10 semi-finalists will be announced

in December and three finalists named in the new year.

Whangarei Catchment Management Group secretary Rae Te Nahu was acknowledged for her work with other community members to enhance the Whangarei stream and its biodiversity.

The nomination described her as a hard worker who was fully committed to the Mahia community, often helping with school projects, planting trees and organising meetings.

Ms Te Nahu said it was humbling to be among the other local hero medal award recipients.

“The work they have carried out in their respective communities has been amazing and awesome.

“We too need to recognise the contributions made by the many voluntary unsung heroes in our Wairoa district, and

anyone can put forward nominations.”

Project co-ordinator for the Whangarei group, Nicolas Caviale-Delezcaux, said Ms Te Nahu was nominated for her dedication, selflessness and commitment to the Mahia community.

Mr Caviale-Delezcaux said she was involved in a wide range of projects, “and is always humble and hard working.”

“She takes an active part to the life of the group and plays a key role in our environmental programme.

Rae believes in a better future and does her bit to make sure the next generations can enjoy the special place we all live in.”

He said her commitment and passion for her work had been acknowledged by the entire Mahia community, and she was also given an invitation to dinner with Gisborne Mayor Meng Foon, “which



□ Rae Te Nahu and Kay Baxter are contenders for the New Zealander of the Year award.

was the icing on the cake — she was buzzing!”

Founder of Koanga Institute, Kay Baxter was nominated as a local hero for her work with, and for the institute. Ms Baxter was described as a world-renowned teacher, permaculturist, educator and writer, and founder of the institute; growing a small seed collection from gardeners across the country into the Southern Hemisphere’s largest and most comprehensive seed repository.

Ms Baxter said it was an honour to receive the award.

“We’ve been doing this work for over 30 years. It’s always felt that we just had to keep plodding on until one miraculous day when the work of saving the seeds would be valued again as taonga.

“This award feels like a public acknowledgement that that time is coming and has maybe come!”

Ms Baxter extended thanks to the elderly gardeners who passed their seeds on to the institute.

“Also my husband Bob, and our children who spent their childhood packing seeds and folding catalogues and potting trees and growing seeds and eating weird vegetables, without whom this job could never have been done.

“I’d also like to give thanks to all those volunteers, and all of our members and staff and students who have given so much over the years.”

Easy to become separated in Urewera bush