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Ko Wai Koe?



PASSIONATE: Council candidate Dave Stewart saw Bob Dylan as a role model when growing up.

Contributed

Whakatāne High School's Jack Kareta-Barrett interviews candidates leading up

to the local body elections this year.

This week, he talks to Dave Stewart.

Recently, I finished my Duke of Edinburgh Gold award and so I have some freedom in my writing.

I never knew that one of the outcomes I would be most proud of are my monthly articles for the Beacon, so I am going to keep writing.

Recently, Nandor Tanczos was visiting and I learned something new about him that I thought everyone should know.

It made me wonder how many of our candidates who want to represent us in council have really interesting stories that we don't know about, beyond the things that relate to them standing.

So, I have decided to do a series of interviews leading up to the local body elections this year.

With the help of Linda Bonne and Dave Stewart, I've refined my original questions and added a couple of new questions.

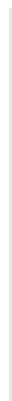
Here is my first interview with councillor candidate Dave Stewart.

Dave, where did you grow up?

In the working class area of south Auckland. I got an apprenticeship at the Otahuhu Railway workshops.

Where did you go to school?

Kingsford Primary, Kedgley Intermediate, Aorere College.



What was your favourite subject, and why?

English. Because words, when joined together the right way, are powerful. Like people.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

At first a clown, then a comedian – I love hearing people laugh.

Who were your role models, and what did your role models teach you?

Early on it was the usual, my mum and dad, my grandparents etc. But later, it was people like Johnny Cash and Bob Dylan for mixing words and music in a powerful way. Politically, it was Norman Kirk, Matiu Rata and John Minto. They taught me what leadership should be.

Who are your role models now?

My father and older brother, both gone, but I try really hard to honour the best things about their lives, which I hope will take away the rough edges on my, at times, abrasiveness.

Are you a good role model?

I've never thought about that. I like to think that by being outspoken I give people the words to use in their circles to express the ideas I believe in.

I know I can go too far at times pushing my point of view and it's a tricky balancing act.

What do you think you model?

Being yourself, warts and all, is enough and be happy about it.

If you could change anything about your life, what would it be and why?

I've never had any regrets until recently. I wish I had agreed to getting a dog when my kids were young and wanted one. I feel really sad at the amount of love we missed out on. That was dumb and selfish. Sorry ,Nicole and Michelle.

What's something about you that people would be surprised to know?

I never had a dog until eight years ago.

What is something you wish people knew about you?

As a kid and young adult, I was racist as hell. I learned how to be racist and never knew it happened until the Springbok Tour came along and kicked my butt. I started to see how racism is used to divide and rule us and steal entire countries off people.

I realised it was easy to see racism in others but not in yourself. And in unlearning racism I realised I had a lot of other unlearning to do. I wish people knew that you can change and be a better human.

What do you love and what gives you joy?

My grandkids. Being a granddad is what I think is my greatest achievement. I never actually knew how loved I was until I became a grandparent.

What community organisations have you been involved in over time?

A long-time community activist in various groups fighting progressive battles.

If you could reorganise local government in our area, what would it look like?

Start with better funding for the jobs central government dictates the council to do.

What's your message to the youth of the Whakatāne district to help them feel positive about the future and achieve their goals?

Do what you love and what gives you joy. If you do that you will be happy and if you're happy, you will be good at it, and if you're good at it, people will pay you to do it.

Money is the byproduct, not the goal. And unlearn hate.

You have been taught how to hate people who look different, love different, speaker different and think different. They are not your enemy and in many cases, they are your friends. Love your friends, always.

Thank you for putting your name forward to lead our community, Dave.

Thanks, regardless of the outcome of the election, I will still lead in the same way I always have, by speaking truth to power.

That can be in a council chamber, a letter to the editor, or on a roundabout.

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