

2 MINUTES WITH Mandy Russell

Mandy is a longstanding member of the Tawa community and has been the 'advocate' (coordinator) at the Tawa Community Centre for the past two years plus.

Where were you born?

Invercargill.

Where did you grow up?

Tawa. My family moved here when I was 6 months old, and apart from a couple of years in town, I've been here ever since.

Where were you educated?

At Redwood School, then from Year 7 onwards at Queen Margaret College. Two years at Whitireia Polytechnic.

Work experience over the years?

In reservations at Tranz Rail for five years, then a hotel reservationist for about six months. Studied at Travel Careers and Training which led on to working as a travel consultant for six years. Full time mum for a spell, then a short role at Plunket Car Seat Rentals. I was a travel tutor at Sir George Seymour National College for one year before taking on the Tawa Community Centre position in June 2013.

What about family?

Married to Steve with two children, Luke 11 and Makayla 9.

What are your interests and hobbies?

I am a runner who enjoys going off road and into trails. I have just completed my first ever marathon over the weekend, the Tarawera Marathon in Rotorua, which was truly an amazing experience, and I cannot wait to go back next year and complete the 50kms. I have great running friends who, without them, I could not have achieved this goal. I love to walk and bike with my family as well, and be anywhere near the beach.

Favourite sports team and/or sportsperson?

I admire amazing kiwi runners like Mal Law and Lisa Tamati, to name a couple. I love watching competitive triathalons and mountain biking like the world champs and the Olympics. I enjoy going to local games like the Saints Basketball (my kids favourites as they throw chocolates to the crowd), cricket (I love the Basin Reserve) to watch the Firebirds, and Phoenix, Pulse and Hurricanes. No real favourite team, but here comes the travel again – I would love to go to the US Tennis Open in New York. I have been to the Australian Open and it was amazing.

Favourite musical group or style of music?

I love kiwi music, and my favourite would be Six60.

Favourite holiday destination in New Zealand?

I love Rotorua/Taupo as it has so many amazing lakes – for swimming, and trails to walk and bike on.

What accomplishments/achievements in your life give you the most satisfaction/pride?

Being close to my family and my children. They are singlehandedly the best thing I have done. Having my family unit makes me the most happy. For me there is not one thing I can pinpoint that I can look back on, but where I am now, and the life experiences that I have had, and what I can pass down to my kids.

What are three things you would like to do before you die?

Mine seem to be all about travel – and that I want to do more of it!

I have lots of places I want to get to, so I need to compile a list!!

Included in that travel is wanting to complete the New York Marathon. Second to that would be to run the Great Wall of China Marathon.

Taking Steve (and the kids) to Disneyland is on my list of must do's. We went to DisneyWorld before we had our kids, and he has been hanging out to go there ever since.

I would also like to complete the major great walks of NZ – walking or running. If I could get one done every year or so I would be really happy. There are also a few others that I would like to complete too as long as they don't have any scary swing bridges, then I will be just fine. Otherwise I will be looking out for a very long detour!!

(Compiled November 2015)

