

Dog of the year Wilbur a hard-working therapy pooch

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Every good dog has a great tale and therapy dog Wilbur the Cavoodle is no exception. Once a month, Wilbur spends a couple of hours entertaining diners at the Hato Hone Wanaka St John seniors' luncheon. The free lunch was enjoyed by many, including Wilbur, his owners Barbara and Graham Povey said.



Oodles of energy . . . Wilbur the Cavoodle is the *Wanaka Sun* Dog of the Year 2023. He is also a member of Wanaka St John's therapy dog team and the Wanaka Oodle Club. He sits with owners Graham and Barbara Povey.

PHOTO: MARJORIE COOK

"It is really good for the people who come. They play bingo, we have singing and quizzes and people really like it. I had a lady asking when the next one was and when I said end of January she said that was such a long way away," Mrs Povey said. Wilbur is also a member of the Wanaka Oodle Club, which meets every Sunday in town to socialise and pose for tourist photographs. The Wanaka Oodle Club accepts other dog breeds too. Mrs Povey started training Wilbur as a therapy dog when he was about one year old.

She had also trained her previous dog, Spider, and her daughter's dog Herbie, with both going on to become reading companions for school pupils. "With animals, it is just about having something special in your life and kids feel a little bit more special and so proud when they are called out to spend time with the dogs," Mrs Povey said. Therapy dogs get exhausted from the attention, so often work just a couple of hours at a time. "When Wilbur comes home from St John's he absolutely conks out," she said. Therapy dogs are sometimes puppy school graduates — as Wilbur was — but they could be

older dogs. Spider signed up when he was eight. St John canine volunteers are put through their paces by dog trainer Leone Ward. They are tested on many things, including coping with moving wheelchairs and things left on the floor. A therapy dog's super powers include obedience, calmness and loyalty, Mrs Povey said. Wilbur has also found a Cavoodle girlfriend, Billy, who volunteers at Te Kura O Take Karara.

■ Contact St John or Age Concern for senior luncheon details. The next is on January 27. Wanaka Oodle Club meets at Wanaka Station Park, Sundays at 9am (10am in winter). — Entrants for the *Wanaka Sun* 2024 Dog of the Week should email hello@thewanakasun.co.nz with name, address, phone number, photo of dog, its name, age, breed and a short story of no more than 50 words.

Building her place in the community



ORIGINS
DANIELA DIAZ SOTO

Petra Trousilova, originally from the Czech Republic, began her New Zealand adventure in 2016 with a working holiday visa. Here, she discovered wine production, a field unrelated to her profession as an architect, yet it brought her immense personal satisfaction and even led her to find love. When she arrived in New Zealand, she picked grapes at a vineyard in Blenheim. "My English was bad when I came to New Zealand, but I learned the job and loved it. It was physical work, challenging for a woman, but they supported me," she said. During the three years she stayed, her English improved; she gained insights into the wine industry; and acquired unexpected skills, such as obtaining her tractor driver's licence.

She started living a different life from what she was used to and discovered new facets of herself. Moreover, it was also where she met her partner Roberto, a Chilean winemaker. After her New Zealand experience, she spent three months in Canada before heading to Chile to reunite with her boyfriend. Together, they travelled through several countries before returning to New Zealand in 2019, settling in Blenheim to work at a vineyard. In 2021, they relocated to Wanaka after Petra found a job in an architecture office while her partner continued working in his field, this time in Cromwell. In her new life in Wanaka, Petra faced the challenge of



A new life . . . Petra Trousilova feels at home in Wanaka. PHOTO: MARJORIE COOK

making new friends, a crucial aspect of her immigrant journey.

A year after moving, she discovered a new activity which deepened her involvement in the community — the Wanaka Squash Club. "Most of my friends are from there. We have a community club and I'm part of the committee. We welcome new people and make them feel at home. I think sports or hobbies are the main ways to connect with people. Now, I'm grateful."

Being a part of this group opened doors for her to actively engage in the Wanaka community, volunteering for various local events such as fundraisings and festivals, including her involvement in the Upper Clutha Welcoming Communities Advisory Group, which helps newcomers integrate into the area. After five years away, she visited her family in the Czech Republic, including her twin sister, whom she dearly misses.

"I loved being at home, but I was looking forward to continue volunteering here. It sounds weird, but it was more because I was meeting friends." Connecting with people

from diverse cultures allowed her to recognise the importance of integration. And building confidence to work in a new language secured her a job at JTB Architects.

Her journey in New Zealand has been one of growth and learning.

"I'm proud of myself. If I never stayed here, I would have never learned to drive or learn English. Or learn something I didn't study."

She was also passionate about continuing to be an active member of the community.

"Everyone needs something that fulfills them. Here, I do something that has meaning for me."

— Daniela Diaz Soto is a Queenstown freelance journalist, originally from Chile. She qualified as a journalist in 2005 and worked for Canal 13, one of Chile's primary television channels, for more than 10 years before coming to New Zealand. She writes columns in Spanish, records podcasts *Calzones Rotos* podcast about *Latinos living all over the world*, is an active volunteer in her Queenstown community and has developed a passion for downhill mountainbiking.

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Power cut

A power cut on Tuesday morning affected more than 10,500 Upper Clutha customers. Aurora Energy general manager people, customer and sustainability Sian Sutton said workers were doing planned maintenance on one of two supplies into the region when the other supply experienced an outage. Both supplies were back on by mid-morning. An additional flicker on Tuesday afternoon was related to a brief power outage in Cromwell, Ms Sutton said.