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To whom it may concern,

My name is Andrea Wech and I am writing this letter to share with you how important and beneficial the experiences are that the NZ Sailing Trust provide for our young people. I am the Outdoor Education teacher at Alfriston College, a decile 2 High School located in Manurewa. This year, we were lucky enough to gain funding through a Youthtown grant to take 24 students on a four-day voyage around the Hauraki Gulf aboard the Steinlager yacht. This experience was genuinely the highlight of their five years at Alfriston College and when they shared their trip reflections on the final day, it was very moving to hear the many things they would take away from this journey, how they would apply it to their lives and their insights into themselves and those around them during this trip. The most unforgettable moment was getting up at 4:45am to watch the America's Cup final as New Zealand crossed the finish line in first place. Celebrations erupted throughout the Steinlager and to celebrate the kids jumped off the yacht for their morning 'shower' in the highest spirits ever. I have attached an article written by one of our students to give an insight of this experience through the students' eyes.

When it came to the planning and Programme organization for this four-day expedition, Erin McKenna was the communication queen. She consistently made sure I had the information I needed and when she needed certain details from me, there was always plenty of time to get these back to her. Erin was always easy to get in touch with and is very personable. The organizational process for this trip was very stress free, which was a relief though unusual as this tends to be the most stressful part of the preparations. I understand the huge logistics that go into a trip like this and Erin and her team really seem to have this down to a fine art.

The crew that we had from NZ Sailing Trust were legendary. The skipper – Alastair and the rest of his team learnt all the kids names and spent time forming relationships and chatting with them all. It was obvious they had high expectations of the students and they strove to meet these while enjoying themselves at the same time. Alastair shared his fantastic sense of humour and his wealth of knowledge and as the kids and teachers listened to his many stories, they were hanging off his every word. This journey has inspired one particular student to pursue a career in this field and he has already been helping the NZ Sailing Trust with yacht maintenance as a start to his sailing education. A segment taken from an article one student wrote for our school newsletter worded it nicely - "The crew we want to thank: Alistair, Bridget, Jonny, Hamish and Meranda. You were absolutely fantastic; your knowledge, your stories and your kind hearts made the trip so unique. Through this experience we have learnt so many things, not only about sailing but about leadership and the strong characteristics and the values of the yachts rightful skipper: Sir Peter Blake who we all have a huge admiration for."

At the end of the four-day expedition aboard this yacht, the students disembarked with a massive sense of achievement. They had all played their roles to sail around Great Barrier Island working together as a team and respecting each individual person's contribution. They learnt many things including how to navigate at sea, how to raise the different types of sails, how to cook in the galley and how to maintain and look after the yacht which was our home for four days. The students were saddened to disembark the Steinlager and have all volunteered to be 'adult helpers' if our school ever gets to complete this journey again.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrea Wech'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'A' being particularly large and stylized.

Andrea Wech