

Celebrating 'one of the greats'

Barry Hislop, Y Central board member who has spent his life helping others through The Y.

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The Y has been central to Barry Hislop's life – and central to his success in the sport, recreation and fitness industry. After a long commitment to the Y movement in New Zealand, he is stepping down from his current position on the Y Central board. After a long and storied career working with the Y there have been many trials and tribulations but most important are the relationships formed throughout Aotearoa.

AN UNBELIEVABLE TEAM OF PEOPLE

Barry started his career in the Royal New Zealand Navy and graduated as a physical education and recreational trainer before leaving in 1972 to take up his first civilian post as physical director at the North Shore YMCA in Auckland.

“It was an induction into hell almost,” he says, laughing. “I ran school gymnastics, so I had to tow a trailer full of gym gear to every school from Devenport, Murrays Bay to Birkenhead. The reduction of salary and a typical working day over 12 hours was an awakening, but there was unbelievable team of people to work alongside. We set up new programmes, organised camps and raised money to open the new YMCA Akoranga Drive Recreation Centre. At the time it was one of the most modern facilities built in New Zealand.”

After a great deal of personal achievements and success in his role at North Shore, Barry's former boss and colleague came knocking. Maurie Rendall, a former Air Force Wing Commander who was the director of the Combined Services School of Physical Education and Barry's mentor, who was the CEO of the Auckland YMCA. He wanted Barry on board to help launch initiatives like the Businessmen's Fitness Centre.

“A difficult decision I said, ‘I didn't want to leave North Shore, the community and board were great support’. But then he said there was a number of benefits and opportunities including a salary increase.

THE BEST JOB IN THE WORLD

Together, the team under Maurie transformed the tired Auckland centre into a modern complex, and Barry started a learning journey to apply the concepts of human performance tests and measures. That journey started in the RNZN which stimulated his lifelong work in sports performance as a fitness consultant, athlete life advisor and coach developer working with a number of national and international sport teams and their athletes. Teams, including the national squash, badminton, rugby league, athletics, cycling, kayaking, rowing, and football teams, and including a stint with the All Blacks in 1977.

With help from Bill Henwood, and leveraging off the expertise of ultrarunner Max Telford, Barry also provided expert guidance in the setup of the Y Marathon club. Barry is a life member, this club is still going strong after 46 years. The club followed the principles set from the fitness centre programmes which adopted an inclusive ‘walk-walk-run’ philosophy that proved so encouraging and successful that Barry completed a study which has been a reference at industry national conferences.

During his time in Auckland, he also was part of a team that worked to raise money to rebuild the accommodation at the famous Camp Adair site in Hunua. Barry had the job of convincing donors to support replacing the run-down old huts with new log cabins (which are still in use today). Although he can't recall anything he said in his speech, he does remember it went down well with the crowd, which included a minor royal: “The royalty fella said it was unbelievable and handed me a check for \$85,000. I ran up the road in my suit – people must have thought I was a nutter.”

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AN OUTPOURING OF LOVE AND CARE

After 10 years at “the best job in the world, to be honest”, family commitments led Barry to move to Masterton, where he became CEO of YMCA Masterton, successfully leading the transition into a brand-new facility. Then he became CEO of the Upper Hutt YMCA, where he and his team turned an old supermarket into a new fitness and community centre.

It was during his tenure in Upper Hutt that a vehicle collision resulted in Barry losing a leg – and he was back teaching aerobics, on crutches, just a few weeks later. He says the support from the people around him was phenomenal:

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In more recent years, Barry became a staff member of the Regional Sport Trust – Sport Wellington region where as general manager he directed the regional physical activity strategies of the Greater Wellington region, managed a coaching centre, and set up offices throughout the Wellington area. He also graduated as an athlete life advisor for high-performance sport working with many sports and athletes at Olympic and Paralympic level. Extending his coaching career to the NZ Wheel Blacks at the Paralympic and world championship competitions. The next stage of employment was as an injury prevention consultant for ACC. All these roles aligned to the Y in values and principles.

A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

Around 10 years ago, he became a board member of Y Central, helping guide the organisation while maintaining his work as a physical education consultant including athlete life advisor for High Performance Sport New Zealand, working with Olympians and Paralympians. He has coached thousands of coaches and published papers on the science of sports performance. He conducts and facilitates leadership training at colleges, injury prevention work for seniors through ACC, and guides physical education programmes for primary schools. His positive influence is felt across the generations in New Zealand sport and recreation.

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The real success is the people you’ve influenced who are still living the game and the thousands of friends you’ve made,” he says. “People still sometimes come up to me and say, ‘My mum said you taught her gymnastics’, and the mum is in her sixties. I was just glad to be part of their journey.

THE SPIRIT OF THE Y: A HUB FOR WELLBEING

Now aged 77, Barry is stepping back from his board role with Y Central, but he has no plans to slow down. His life has been guided by his personal motto: “Bring goodness and respect. Expect to do my very best with a good attitude. I have talent and time to gift.” A belief in my “Why”

When you know your ‘knowledge, skills and attitude’ or KSA, Barry believes you can achieve more and be more productive; he wants to keep passing this knowledge onto the next generation of active Kiwis. He is passionate about encouraging people to live active, healthy lives through positive support and care.

“The history of the Y extends throughout the world in towns, communities and even to the battle fields in that it was always a hub to go to for respite and friendship, where you could always find tea and a welcoming face. It was a place that cared about your wellbeing. That’s the spirit I always refer back to – I never thought about working at the Y as just a job. It’s kind of like a calling.”

