

Leo Katie steps up to shape our Lions future

First she helped establish a university Omega club and now this young achiever is about to turn her sights to constitutional matters

Leo Katie Townsend admits she was overwhelmed when she found out she had been chosen by Lions Clubs International to be the Leo Panellist for Constitutional Area 7.

While she had applied for the prestigious position and been approved by the District E Leo Chairman, it still came as a shock.

“When you see or hear of opportunities like this one you really don’t know anything until you try,” says Katie, a past Rangiora High School Leo who in 2019 helped establish and became founding President of an Omega Leo Club sponsored by the Lions Club of Halswell and Districts at Canterbury University.

“Yes I have had the drive to be a Leo and yes it’s been a really interesting and exciting journey so far, but how do you excite others to follow?”

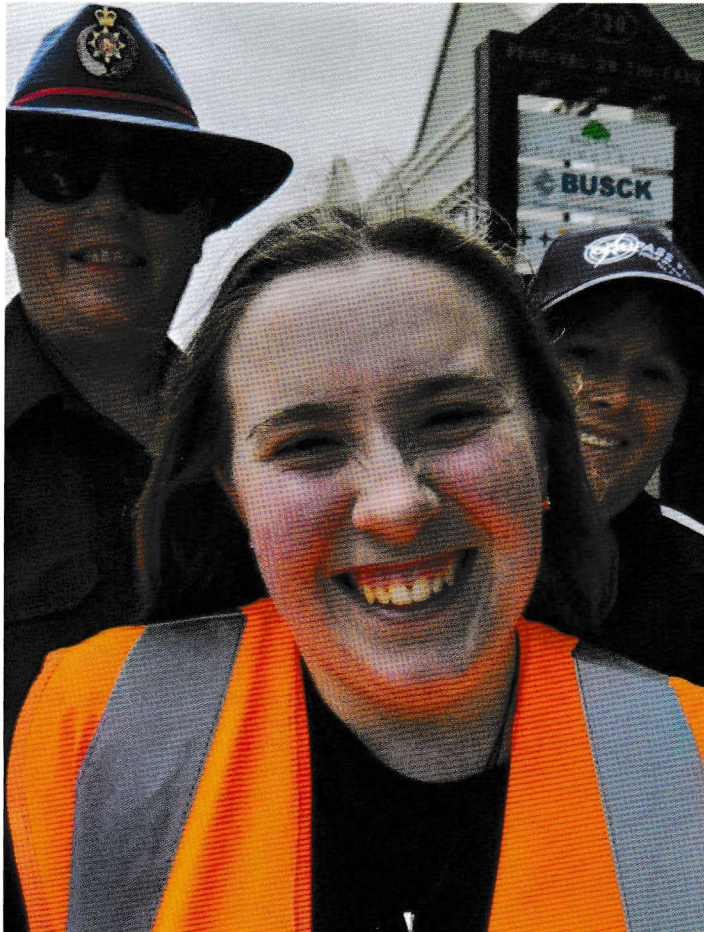
While Katie might have some qualms, those who know her have no doubt she has the qualities to be a success in the position.

One of her strongest supporters, Leo Adviser Wayne Paulin, says Katie, who initially struggled in high school due to autism, has developed enormously and has a determination to succeed.

“In 2016 when two Lions from Rangiora pushed hard to start a Leo Club at Rangiora High School, Katie showed interest and joined,” recalls Wayne.

“Katie was really keen from day one and was always first to volunteer for any projects as well as joining in socially.

“In 2017 the Speechmaker Competition needed more contestants and we put this to the club where Katie very



quietly said she would like to give it a go.

“Even today her speech about her disability still gives me one ‘goose bumps’ – but the real buzz was that she found her feet and voice.

“Her confidence began to grow steadily and she found public speaking wasn’t so bad after all.”

As the Constitutional Area 7 Leo panellist, a position that starts on July 1, Katie hopes to boost empowerment among colleagues and communication between clubs and districts, while creating new opportunities for Leos to grow their skill set.

“No doubt these will change as I learn more from my seniors

and other Leos,” she says.

“Currently, thanks to the District Leo Chair, I am part of a training team to train both Leos and Leo Advisors

“Having seen that others may have stayed in Leos had they had some form of training, I thought this idea had real merit as my understanding is that the Lions organisation is like any business – unless you train people in how they can understand your business, how can they be a useful employee?”

“I’m in that position now, trying to earn a living while finishing my university studies and applying for jobs associated with biosecurity. How do I have time for Leos?”

“It is by budgeting any spare time available – but I understand I can’t do everything. This is where teamwork is precious.”