



**SUPPORTING LOCAL GROUPS**

We have proudly supported several local initiatives, and served as an umbrella to small community groups like the: **Middlemarch Harakeke Weavers, Strath Taieri Community Resilience Group, The Growcotts Community Garden, The Junction Crafts Group, and The Strath Taieri Food Fairies**—each strengthening community connections in their own unique way.

# NEWSLETTER

**CONNECTION, ENGAGEMENT, AND GROWING COMPETENCY,**

As we come to the close of 2025, we can proudly say it's been an incredibly busy and rewarding year for the Strath Taieri Connect Charitable Trust (STCCT). **Thanks to the generous support of our funders—Dunedin City Council Place-Based Fund, The DIA Lottery Commission, and The Catalytic Foundation**—we've been able to deliver meaningful initiatives that strengthen and celebrate our community.

At STCCT, we stand for **Connection, Engagement, and Growing Competency**, and we are committed to being community-led in everything we do.

These values guide every project, event, and conversation—ensuring that our work reflects the needs and aspirations of Strath Taieri residents while building skills, confidence, and strong relationships across our region.



*"Thank you to everyone for being part of the **CONNECT** story"*

## WELCOME SHELDON

2025 has been a busy year, and it's been great to have **Sheldon Aitken** come on board to help me with some of our community led projects.



## MARCH

In March, we celebrated International Women's Day with a special community initiative—a giveaway hamper donated by generous locals. To make it meaningful, we invited nominations for inspiring women and asked people to share why they deserved recognition. The responses were incredible, highlighting the strength, kindness, and resilience of women who make Strath Taieri so special. After a draw by Mrs. Lynch (Strath Taieri School teacher), we had a winner—who, in true community spirit, shared many items with others, saying she didn't need it all herself. That generosity perfectly captured the essence of the day.

For me, the highlight was contacting every nominated woman to share the heartfelt messages—anonymously, of course. It was a joy to remind these amazing women just how valued they are.

The **Strath Taieri A&P Show** in March is always a highlight—a vibrant celebration of rural life with something for everyone: show jumping, kids' activities, food stalls, crafts, farming exhibits, live music, and classic competitions like the muster race and biggest pumpkin contest.

For STCCT, it's more than a fun day—it's a chance to connect. Each year, we set up our stall with the BBQ trailer serving free pikelets and invite visitors to share ideas for workshops, events, and projects. This year, our "Share Your Ideas" board filled quickly with creative suggestions—a real testament to our community's passion and imagination.

A huge thank you to the A&P Show Committee for making this cornerstone event such a success. We're proud to be part of it!

Collaboration has been key this year. Working with the Community Board and Dunedin's Task Force Green Team, we launched the Middlemarch Beautification Project—tidying public spaces, pruning, mowing, and clearing debris. The team also supported the Lions Club with firewood prep, a vital service for locals. Thanks to Community Board funding, we kept spirits high with BBQ meals during visits. With the Otago Goldfields Cavalcade coming in March 2026, these efforts ensure Middlemarch looks its best. Huge thanks to everyone involved!

## APRIL

April brought the **National Ploughing Championships** to Middlemarch - a week-long celebration of skill and tradition with competitors from across New Zealand. STCCT was proud to help secure funding for this iconic event, honoring farming heritage and community spirit. Watching the incredible horses and dedicated ploughers in action was a real highlight - keeping this tradition alive for future generations.



# MAY

On May 20, we held our **AGM at the Middlemarch Bowling Club**—a great chance to reflect on achievements, challenges, and future goals. After the formal meeting, we welcomed community input through an open forum. Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed—your ideas help shape STCCT’s direction.



# JUNE

That month we also hosted a **sausage-making workshop with local expert Georgia Hendrie**. Twenty-one participants experienced a hands-on, lively, and full of laughter workshop—because let’s be honest, no sausage-making workshop is complete without a few cheeky jokes! Participants rolled up their sleeves, mixed, stuffed, and tied their creations, gaining practical skills that promote self-sufficiency and resilience—key values for our rural community. Feedback was fantastic, and a follow-up group chat keeps the conversation going—building resilience and community ties.

On June 20, we also hosted **our first Matariki Celebration**—a magical evening of kai, kapa haka, and reflection. With amazing volunteer support, including the Peter Lyons Shearing Team, we prepared a traditional hāngī at the Community Centre and A&P Showgrounds.

From chopping firewood and prepping vegetables to digging the fire pit and tending the kai, it was a true community effort. A big thank you to Noel, Eric, Rose—the hāngī chiefs—and everyone who pitched in. Funding for the kai came through a **DCC Matching Neighbourhood Grant**, secured by a community member—a great example of collaboration. Leftovers were shared with volunteers and those in need, reinforcing the spirit of generosity. The evening featured delicious food, **kapa haka by Strath Taieri School** children, harakeke star weaving, and time to reflect on renewal and planning ahead.

**For STCCT, this event perfectly embodied our values of Connection, Engagement, and Growing Competency—honoring Māori culture while strengthening community ties.**



# OCTOBER

In October, the Lee Stream Hall Committee asked for help **funding a defibrillator**, as the nearest was 30 minutes away. STCCT applied to the Taieri Lions Club, who generously donated \$1,700 in November. This project was a highlight—quick action, strong collaboration, and a tangible improvement in community safety. Having a defibrillator close at hand gives residents peace of mind and strengthens local resilience.



We also organised a **First Aid Course** for 23 attendees. While coordinating the course took effort, the workshop was fantastic—participants learned essential life-saving skills in a fun, engaging way. Emergencies can happen anywhere, and knowing how to respond builds confidence and resilience. Feedback was excellent, with many saying they felt more prepared and empowered. For STCCT, that's what it's all about—creating opportunities that make our community safer and stronger.

On October 31, we **hosted our first Halloween event, "The Ghostly Gathering," at the Middlemarch Golf Club**. Thirty-five kids enjoyed games, a costume parade, and a lolly scramble, with spot prizes donated by Maggie's Shop—thank you, Maggie! Sheldon's spooky decorations set the scene, and the potluck dinner was full of creative treats. More than just a party, it was a chance for families to connect, laugh, and celebrate—building memories and community spirit.



# NOVEMBER

In November, we partnered with the **Strath Taieri Food Fairies and Community Resilience Group** to host our **first Living Well, Living Ready event**—focused on emergency preparedness and self-sufficiency. Living rurally means being ready for anything, and this day was all about sharing knowledge and practical strategies. We were privileged to hear from Dr Caroline Orchiston on earthquake preparedness and Gillian Swinton on homesteading and resilience—her Scottish thrift comment was a crowd favorite! **Thanks to sponsors Beef & Lamb, FMG, DCC, and JBWere**, the event was free, with great food and drinks provided. Attendees also donated canned goods for the Food Fairies, reinforcing the spirit of care and connection.

Late November saw another fantastic community-led initiative—our **Curds & Community Cheese-Making Workshop** at the Strath Taieri Community Centre. Led by local dairy enthusiast **Jackie Cameron** (and her beautiful Jersey cow, Rosie), 20 participants learned how to milk a house cow and make halloumi cheese. Spots filled within hours, showing the huge interest in practical skills that build resilience and self-sufficiency.

The atmosphere was lively and hands-on, with plenty of laughter and shared learning. Feedback was excellent, and a follow-up group chat is buzzing with photos and tips. With demand so high, another workshop is already planned! This event perfectly reflects STCCT's mission—creating opportunities that connect people and strengthen rural skills.



**Behind the scenes, STCCT works hard to keep things running**—delivering welcome packs, maintaining the phone directory, managing assets like the BBQ trailer and chiller, preparing funding applications, and building connections with local groups.

A top priority this year has been securing funding for our coordinator role and operational costs—essential for sustaining projects, events, and community support.

**These foundations ensure we can keep turning ideas into action.**

**A huge thank you to our funders: DCC Place-Based Fund, DIA Lottery Commission, and The Catalytic Foundation** - for making this possible.

Here's to another year of connection, engagement, and growing competency.

**Thank you, Strath Taieri, for an amazing year!**

**We've loved working together to create opportunities that connect and strengthen our community. Follow updates on Facebook, our website ([www.strathtaiericonnect.org.nz](http://www.strathtaiericonnect.org.nz)), and in the Rock & Pillar Post.**

**Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!**

**From the STCCT Team** - Lynnore Templeton, Robin Thomas, Emily Jones, Carmen Hope, Bridget Roulston, Barry Taylor, Rebecca Costelloe, Jacquie Lucas, Sheldon Aitken & Dianna Bradshaw.