

# Girl who 'wouldn't walk' now off to World Cup event

After being told she would never be able to use her feet again, bubbly 13-year-old Niketa Wells is now currently training for the Taekwondo World Cup in Brighton later this year and would like to share her story in the hope of inspiring others with her rare condition to not give up.

Nearly one year ago, Waiuku teenager, Niketa, sprained her ankle while play wrestling with her little brother. After one week later, it wasn't getting any better and mum, Pip took her doctors.

"She had incredible pain up her right leg and it was completely white, like there was no circulation in it," explained Pip. "When they took her temperature, there was a 13 degree difference between her legs. We were told that Niketa had RSD, and that she needed to stretch and massage her leg to help it get better and were sent home."

Reflex sympathetic dystrophy, which is also known as complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS), is a complex disorder that may develop as a result of injury or trauma to a certain area of the body.

According to the Neurological Foundation of New Zealand, RSD is a chronic pain condition that is believed to be the result of dysfunction in the central or peripheral nervous systems. Some of the symptoms include dramatic changes in the colour and temperature of the skin over the affected limb or body part, accompanied by intense burning pain, skin sensitivity, sweating or swelling.

For Niketa and her family, they didn't realise just how serious the case was.

"Three weeks later, her right leg was getting worse and her left leg began showing the symptoms. It got to the stage where her nerves in her lower legs felt everything. From air whistling past to the cats tail brushing up against her leg, Niketa just couldn't handle anything touching her legs," says Pip.

"The pain was so intense that I wasn't able to walk. It was like my brain was overreacting and sending signals that everything was danger to my legs," says Niketa. *Continued page 18*

Right: After being diagnosed with Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy and told that she was never to walk again, Niketa Wells is now currently training for the Taekwondo World Cup, which will be held in Brighton, England later in October.



# New Supercity rates to hit letterboxes this week

**"THE CHANGES ARE NOT THE RESULT OF RECKLESS SPENDING" - MAYOR LEN BROWN**

Residents in what was formerly Franklin are expected to be the least hardest hit as the new rating system for the Auckland Supercity kicks in this week.

The first bills from Auckland Council's new single rating system will arrive in letterboxes this week as the region comes to grips with the reality of amalgamating eight councils into one.

Rates notices will start arriving in letterboxes from Thursday in the north and west and from Tuesday 7 August in the rest of Auckland.

"The move to a single rating system based on capital value is an inescapable consequence of the government's decision to merge the old councils," says the Mayor. "Because of that, some people's rates will go up and some will go down."

"The thing to remember is that this council has delivered an average rates rise of just 3.6 per cent. That compares the 9 per cent rise we faced after the amalgamation and an average 5.7 per cent rise per annum over the past seven years

of the former councils."

Rates changes vary greatly across the new Auckland and Len Brown will be visiting the far reaches of the region over the coming weeks to explain the changes.

"The changes are not the result of reckless spending – that is a myth – in fact international ratings agency Standard and Poors have reinforced our financial position with an AA rating," says the Mayor.

Auckland Council has taken a number of steps to lessen the impact of amalgamation. A total of \$1.7 billion in savings has been delivered and a transition proposal was put to government in order to smooth out the impact of amalgamation on Auckland households and businesses.

"Prior to implementing the 10 per cent transition cap, more than 133,000 residential ratepayers faced a double-digit increase in the first year as a result of the council merger. That was just not fair and that is no longer the case. In fact, more than 187,000 households will notice their rates have decreased when the bill arrives.

"We also want to make sure that those people who are eligible for rates postponements, rebates and remissions can access them, including the newly-introduced remission scheme for residents of license to occupy retirement villages."

While there is some confusion about how the amalgamation has affected the rating system there are also other changes to contend with, such as revaluations, the move to capital value and wastewater being the responsibility of Watercare or Veolia Water. The levy has been removed from Auckland Council's bill and now appears on the bill from your water supplier.

"When faced with changes this large, Auckland Council had no choice but to forge the fairest possible path. I know times are tough, which is why we've tried to be as pragmatic as possible and reduce the impacts of transition," says the Mayor.

More information on the new rates system is available from [www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz) or (09) 301 0101.

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# Nikita beats the odds - with support

*Continued from page 1:*

From then on, Niketa lost the use of her legs. Walking was not a possibility due to the pain and she spent weeks at home, undergoing physiotherapy from her wheelchair. During this time, they were told during one of the many visits to the doctor that the family were told to prepare for the worst, which was Niketa may never use her feet again.

"It got to the stage where we couldn't do it at home anymore. Niketa was in such pain. We went back into hospital and were then transferred into the Wilson Centre, a rehabilitation unit for children," says Pip.

Niketa and Pip moved into the Wilson Centre for seven months, where Niketa undertook physiotherapy three times a day, something she describes as absolute agony.

"I had to try and mentally block the pain. Even though I was on medication to help ease it, the pain was still there. I even said to my mum and the doctor, 'Would it help if you just amputated my legs?' I just wanted the pain to go away," explains Niketa.

"But I had to keep positive. And it was when I received a letter from Grand Master Lan, a Taekwondo World Champion based in Germany, saying he believed that I could beat this and that I was a fighter, that I started to push myself."

Niketa says that while the physiotherapy helped, it was really her instructor, Master Paul McPhail of Papakura, who really helped her begin walking again.

While she was still in her wheelchair, Niketa still participated at Taekwondo training, with her goal always set in the back of her mind - to compete in the Brighton World Cup in England in October and Master McPhail was there supporting her through the whole process.

By Christmas last year, Niketa had progressed onto crutches and had begun preparing her training schedule for her black

belt.

But as Niketa progressed and began controlling the pain, Pip started researching the outcomes of people who have suffered from RSD and was shocked to find that success cases were very limited.

"Niketa had just come so far, and the more she progressed, the more we found out how limited success stories of RSD were.

"In most cases, the RSD had become irreversible, and the patients had to live with it for the rest of their lives. Now that was hard at the time, thinking of that possibility."

Pip explained that the rare syndrome just doesn't affect the children, but the parents as well.

"The financial burden that is on these parents with children affected by RSD was huge, I had to give up my job and care for Niketa full time. Not only that, the children just can't see the big picture. They want a quick fix, like Niketa, wanting her legs amputated just to remove the pain then and there, but not thinking about how that action is going to affect her later in life. It was really, really hard."

For Niketa, the hardest thing for her was going from being an outdoor person, who loved to be active, to teaching herself to walk again.

"But through the support from my instructor, my family and the RSD specialists, I learnt not to underestimate the true discipline of thinking."

While it has taken Niketa well over a year to learn to walk again, she still says she hasn't fully recovered yet and there may be a chance that the RSD may come back.

"I still get a bit of pain in my right leg and the doctors say they don't actually know what causes RSD and it might come back during any stage of my life. It is hard to know that but we are working through it," says Niketa.

Pip and Niketa would like to thank the community for their

support from the time Niketa was diagnosed up until now.

"It was absolutely amazing. The support enabled us to help continue on with Niketa and get us to where we are today. And huge thanks to Master McPhail and for the only two specialists who work with RSD affected children in the whole of New Zealand, we are just re-

ally grateful," says Pip.

And for Niketa, she hopes that her story will inspire others to not give up, to keep pushing their way through the pain and to keep thinking positively.

"It was very hard, but I never give up. And I believe if I can learn to walk again, then other children have a fair chance at making through RSD too."



Above: While she was contained in her wheelchair, Niketa Wells still participated at Taekwondo training, with her goal always set in the back of her mind - to compete in the Brighton World Cup.

# Carol scoops the big national prize



Congratulations to Carol Knott of Action Office Products Depot, Pukekohe, who scooped Office Products Depot Sales Person of the Year for 2012 last weekend at the annual conference.

Held in Auckland at Sky-city Convention Centre, the OPD Expomania was held over two days.

Carol has been working at Action Office Product Depot, Pukekohe for nearly four years and is rapt with the result.

Sales Person of the Year is represented throughout the nation, and Carol was up against 36 contestants.

The award is measured across six categories over a 12 month period, and points are collected from each one, with the awards

measured on the total amount collected.

Carol was ahead of the other contestants by a massive 10 points and topped two of the categories - Account Acquisition and Account Retention.

Last year, Carol finished in seventh place, and asked the National Sales Manager on how to make it into the top three. She has since then been striving to reach that goal, and never expected to get first prize this year.

Company owner, Bill Deed, is extremely pleased with the result.

"We have all been working hard to take our business to the next level and Carol's dedication and success is a real inspiration to us."

## LOST

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