

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF



Master Plumbers
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Plumber

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“PLUMBING IS AWESOME”

Why NZ's first-ever female Young Plumber of the Year loves her trade

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TAKING THE TITLE

For the very first time, a woman has won Plumbing World's Young Plumber of the Year competition. *NZ Plumber* talked to **Veronika Kreitner** about the event, her thoughts on being a female tradie... and why plumbing is the career choice for her.

When we caught up with Veronika Kreitner, she was working on her favourite challenge... fixing a water leak. "I love digging holes to find them," says Veronika, who works alongside boss Craig Guy at Guy Plumbing & Gas in Wanaka.

Originally from Germany, she left home at 18 to go travelling in New Zealand and fell in love with Wanaka for its stunning scenery and plentiful opportunities for mountain biking, hiking and skiing.

Now 28 and in the fourth year of her plumbing, drainlaying and gasfitting apprenticeship, Veronika was introduced to her future career through a chance conversation with a friend at the pub, whose partner's firm were looking for an apprentice.

She always knew her career would be in a trade—it was just a matter of which. "My dad is a landscape gardener, so I grew up around tradies," she says. "I like getting

stuck in and getting my hands dirty, and plumbing is awesome because you never do the same thing twice."

When her first boss retired, she jumped at the chance to complete her apprenticeship at Craig's business, which specialises in maintenance work and 24/7 emergency services for homes, restaurants and hotels—and she says they are "insanely busy", despite the impacts of the Covid pandemic.

Being in a team of two, Veronika says she's been lucky to have on-job training in a wide range of skills, with Craig handing her the van keys virtually on day one to help handle the workload.

Young Plumber of the Year success

When the manager at her local Plumbing World branch suggested to Veronika that she enter the 2021 Young Plumber of the Year competition, she thought she might as well go along and find out what it was all about. >>>

Veronika Kreitner, 2021 Young Plumber of the Year winner and fourth-year apprentice at Guy Plumbing & Gas in Wanaka.



Veronika says she loves getting her hands dirty and getting stuck in.





She never imagined that she'd make it through to the national final this February as a Wildcard (having placed second at her regional competition)—and it came as a complete shock to hear her name announced as the overall winner.

“The national final was a lot more intense than the regional, starting with a 45-minute written theory test,” she says. “We also had to do a bathroom pipe out and fit out, with vanity, toilet, shower and solar hot water... all within four hours. It was very tight.”

Veronika is the first woman to take home the Young Plumber of the Year title, >>>

Plumbing World CEO Rob Kidd with Veronika Kreitner, the first woman to win the Young Plumber of the Year Competition. The 2021 national final was held this February at Hamilton's Claudelands Arena, having been delayed due to Covid. “Veronika's win is testament to her hard work and dedication to her career in plumbing,” says Kidd.

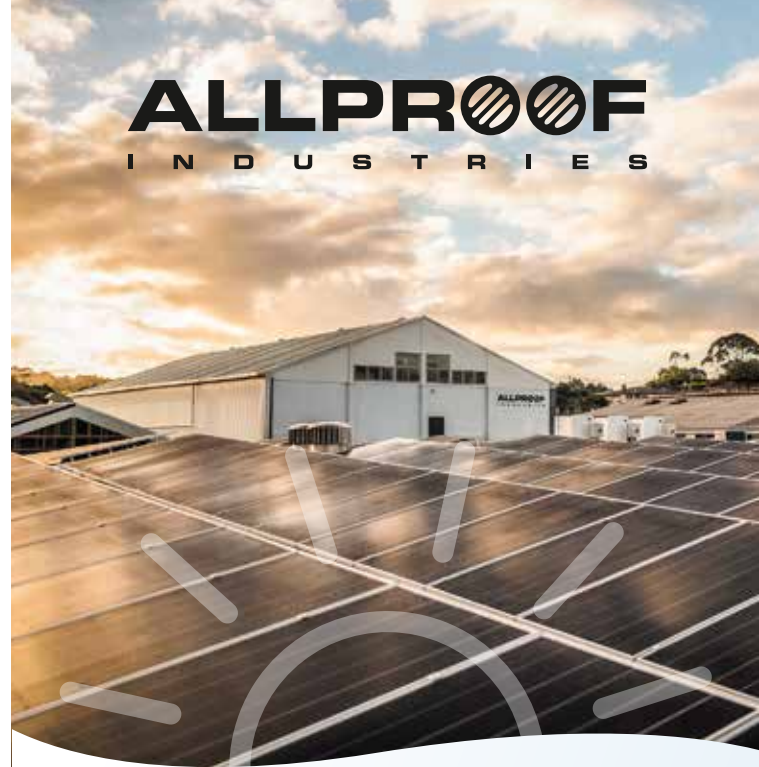
Attracting new talent

The Young Plumber of the Year competition is a chance to recognise the high calibre in today's plumbing trade and the support of employers and suppliers that keep the wheels turning. It also aims to encourage other young Kiwis to consider a plumbing career.

“New Zealand's construction sector continues to face a growing shortage of tradespeople that will only increase until apprentices can start filling the gaps,” says Plumbing World General Manager Rob Kidd.

Research suggests that as a country we currently need a 30% increase in qualified plumbers to join the trade to plug the skills shortage. Demand has continued to grow over the past few years, as more Kiwis choose to spend their savings on home renovations rather than on the usual overseas holidays due to Covid.

“As the industry demand continues to expand, there comes an abundance of opportunities and career growth for skilled tradespeople,” says Kidd. “Now more than ever it's a great time for young Kiwis to consider starting a career in plumbing.”



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Veronika during the four-hour practical stage of the national final. "I had no expectations going into the final," she says. "It was a lot more intense than the regional event."



2021 WINNERS

Congratulations to all 10 contestants who represented their regions at the 2021 Young Plumber of the Year National Final in Hamilton in February.

1st – Veronika Kreitner

Guy Plumbing & Gas,
Southern Region (Wildcard)

2nd – Nick Sillars

Straight Flush,
Wellington/Marlborough Region

3rd – Sam Sonneveld

Green Plumbing & Heating,
Auckland Metro Region.

George Wrenn, of Master Plumbers' member business Plumbers HB, was also awarded MVP (Most Valuable Plumber) at the event.



Nick Sillars, a tradesman at Master Plumbers member business Straight Flush, placed an admirable second at the National Final. "Proud to support Nick at the Young Plumber of the Year competition," said Ngaire Mansfield, who runs Straight Flush with husband Jeremy. "He has entered four times, and this proves that persistence pays off. I still don't think he will stop entering—that's the spirit!"

outperforming nine other competitors aged 31 and under from around New Zealand to win her share of \$55,000 worth of prizes.

"I really do credit a lot of what I've done throughout this competition to my boss," she says. "I've been taught to be really particular with each job that I do and to always be very organised. This win is testament to the fact that being meticulous with each task really does pay off. Building your skills on the job and then having the opportunity to showcase them in a competition like this is so motivating and also really fun."

"So many avenues for growth"

Veronika says she'd definitely recommend plumbing to anyone considering a career in the trades—especially other women.

"We can do it just as well as the guys can!" she says. "There are so many avenues for growth and development within this career, which is super worthwhile if you put in the hard work and aim to always be improving your skills."

There are now heaps of women tradies working in and around Wanaka, says Veronika, and customers are becoming

increasingly used to having a woman plumber arrive at the job. "We may not be able to lift as much as some men, but we can ask for a hand—and that's the right thing to do for health and safety anyway," she says.

As far as the future's concerned, Wanaka is now where Veronika calls home and she is forging ahead with her career, having already completed her plumbing and drainlaying registration exams and preparing to sit her gasfitting exam.

With the 2021 Young Plumber of the Year title to her name, there's no doubt she'll go far. 🏆

plumbingworld
young plumber
 of the year

WE HAVE OUR WINNER!

1ST PLACE - VERONIKA KREITNER, GUY PLUMBING & GAS, WANAKA.



2ND PLACE - NICK SILLARS

Straight Flush Plumbing Ltd, Wellington.

3RD PLACE - SAM SONNEVELD

Green Plumbing & Heating Ltd, Auckland.

MOST VALUABLE PLUMBER - GEORGE WRENN

Plumbers HB, Hawkes Bay.

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