

# CAREERS WITH FONTERRA

## ENGINEERING APPRENTICESHIPS OPEN DOORS

writer **PETER WHITE** // photographer **PAULA McINNES**

**“This has been like a dream come true for me to be able to see how something works as part of a process, to understand it and find out what you need to do to make that function again,”** says **SAM SKOVLUND**.

“There is no greater joy than working with my hands and seeing something good come out of it.”

Sam, 24, is in the third year of her mechanical engineering apprenticeship, working at Fonterra’s Kauri site in Whangārei. She is part of the factory maintenance department that keeps the massive machinery operating efficiently.

“Getting a mechanical engineering apprenticeship was just amazing,” she says. “It has been really interesting learning about the different types of machinery that are used, the level of complexity and sometimes the simplicity of some of our major components.

“Just seeing how everything works has always been really interesting for me. I really enjoy the problem-solving aspect of it and the detective work that goes with it, to find out what caused the issues and then being able to fix the problem.”

Sam says there is also the satisfaction that comes from getting a job done to completion. Her role is full of variety and involves working on a wide range of machinery.

“We do have quite a few regular maintenance jobs but if there is a breakdown then it can be very exciting but very nerve-racking at the same time. We do get daily hiccups we need to address, and we work a lot on valves and pumps, plus other complex machinery that needs our attention.”

Sam gained plenty of practical skills – and important life skills – working on various projects after she left school, including two years overseas.

“It was a bit of a convoluted journey to where I am now. I had always been mechanically-inclined. I enjoy taking stuff apart to fix it. After school, I started working at the shipyards in Whangārei doing work on the vessels. I wanted to get into the superyacht engineering side.

“I worked in Auckland, then overseas, and most of the time I was hands-on in some sort of engineering work. You do a lot of character building just living when you are overseas and that helps you get to where you want to go.”

Sam enjoys the work culture at Fonterra and receives plenty of support from team leaders and managers.

In Year 13 at Whangārei Girls’ High School she took Physics, Chemistry, Calculus, Product and Design, and English.

Her advice to school leavers interested in a career in mechanical engineering is to be honest, open up to your mistakes and ask for help if you need it.

“There are a lot of people out there willing to teach enthusiastic people and you don’t have to have the highest grades. You just need to have a good attitude and be willing to learn and listen to the people around you.”



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SAM SKOVLUND

### KEY FACTS



- **SAM SKOVLUND** IS IN THE THIRD YEAR OF HER **MECHANICAL ENGINEERING APPRENTICESHIP**, WORKING AT **FONTERRA’S KAURI SITE** IN **WHANGĀREI**.
- SHE IS PART OF THE **FACTORY MAINTENANCE TEAM** THAT KEEPS THE MACHINERY AT THE PLANT OPERATING EFFICIENTLY.
- **SAM** WORKED IN A **VARIETY OF ENGINEERING ROLES**, IN **WHANGĀREI**, **AUCKLAND** AND **OVERSEAS**, BEFORE JOINING **FONTERRA** AS AN APPRENTICE.

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