

Finding families in essay contest

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A class of Year 8 Hereworth students hasn't just been learning about their families, they've been writing about them too.

The Hawke's Bay Branch of New Zealand Founders has been working with Hereworth School on a pilot essay competition — the title of the essay *My Family — a New Life In New Zealand*. Last month winner Jack Blyth was awarded the top prize of \$100.

"It was absolutely unanimous — he stood out. He wrote it well and made it interesting. He had his references, his sources and acknowledged everything," says Hawke's Bay branch president and co-judge Paddy Bayley.

Paddy says the society wanted to come up with something they could sponsor which worked in with their philosophy. The essay competition fitted the bill and also encouraged young people to "spark off some research skills".

"We were trying to think of how to get younger people interested in their family history."

A sub-committee of six, including editors, teachers and writers, read every essay, and along with Jack's win, two other boys from the class of 22 students were chosen to receive highly commended awards. One student could 'maybe' trace his heritage back to the legendary sheep rustler James Mckenzie, Paddy says. One unearthed a gang of goldminers and another found out his predecessor was charged with bigamy.

"We learnt a lot — a wide range. They all had good points. We always said we'd give one prize but the two others were



WELL DONE: HB Founders Society essay competition winners are (from left) High Kilsby, highly commended, Jack Blyth, winner and John O'Connor, highly commended.

very good." The school library received a donation towards books and the winning essay will be published in the New Zealand Founders' Bulletin.

Paddy says a range of nationalities were represented in essays, with one student writing about the philosophy of his family.

"It was a little gem — the importance of family life."

Although the parents were notified children would be receiving awards at assembly, the winners were kept a secret. Paddy and vice-president Kath La Rooy took treats to the class to thank them for their efforts. The group is hoping to carry on with another essay competition for the next few years before offering the opportunity to a girls' school.

"We were really thrilled with the way the school handled it — the response, the whole exercise. They made it so easy for us. We went with our instincts — it was all new ground."