



# 30 Years of family, community, and connection

For the people of Marlborough, McDonald's Blenheim is not just part of the town, it's part of their story.

When McDonald's Blenheim opened its doors in 1995, it was more than just a new restaurant. It was the start of a story that has intertwined family, community, and connection for three decades.

The journey began with the McAuslin family. Having left careers in policing and advertising, they embraced the opportunity to become franchisees and quickly became part of Marlborough's life. For their daughter, Lauren, McDonald's became the backdrop to her childhood. By 30, she had stepped into her parents' shoes, becoming the McDonald's Blenheim franchisee.

Lauren's energy and commitment shaped the restaurant into more than a place to eat. It became a hub where locals gathered, young people got their first jobs, and birthdays and milestones were celebrated.

"The biggest lesson I inherited from my parents was to stay close to your people," says Lauren. "Everyone has different things going on in their lives, and knowing what's happening helps you understand behaviours better."

When it was time to move on, the restaurant found continuity in another family with close ties to the McAuslins. Wilhelm Maas, a long-time family friend, took over the franchise, bringing the same warmth and dedication. His son Dan eventually followed in his footsteps, ensuring the restaurant remained firmly rooted in the Blenheim community.

Today, under Dan's leadership, McDonald's Blenheim continues to thrive as both a business and a community

cornerstone. Staff loyalty has been a hallmark of the store, with team members like Ash and Emily working across multiple franchisees and decades.

"I started in school and have worked my way into management, which has been great. I enjoy the people here and the family we have created together," says Emily. "The flexibility really works for me; I was able to have a baby and come back and work around the demands of having a child," she adds.

Oleni, the current restaurant manager, has been part of the McDonald's Blenheim family since Wilhelm took over, following him all the way from Wellington. She's been an enduring presence at the heart of the store. "We have the lowest staff turnover in the country, which is a testament to the culture of the restaurant and the people we have," says Dan.

The restaurant has also evolved physically, undergoing three major renovations to keep up with the growing town. From dual drive-through lanes to a bustling McCafé, which is now the busiest coffee destination in Blenheim, the upgrades reflect both local demand and the store's commitment to serving its community.

But McDonald's Blenheim's true legacy lies beyond its walls. Over the years, the restaurant has supported schools, community initiatives, and local organisations. Its biggest sponsorship, Inspire Marlborough, helps young people pursue their passions, while Ronald McDonald House has long been a cause close to the team's heart and the Maas family, as they stayed in RMHC when Dan's daughter Demi was born with a heart defect.

For both the McAuslin and Maas families, the highlight has always been people. Generations of locals have started their working lives at McDonald's Blenheim, building friendships, learning valuable skills, and carrying those experiences into wider community

roles. "It's really special that we can maintain continuity, grow talent, and remain a central part of the community while staying family-focused," says Dan.

As McDonald's Blenheim marks 30 years, its story is a reminder that behind every Macca's is a local family, investing in their community and shaping the lives of those around them.



**TOP** The McAuslin family and the Macca's Blenheim crew with Jonah Lomu during his visit to the restaurant in 1995.

**ABOVE** Keri and Dan Mass, the current McDonald's Blenheim franchisees.

Want to know more? Stop by your local Macca's and discover the heart behind the golden arches.