**35 Years with McDonald’s: The New Operator of the Year Shares her Journey**

McDonald’s Northland Franchisee, Lynley Reid has recently been awarded the prestigious Operator of the Year award at the McDonald’s Annual Franchisee Gala Awards. Her McDonald’s career journey spans over three decades, starting from being a high school Crew worker, to a restaurant manager, and now, being a highly awarded franchise worker, is one McDonald’s is proud to share.

The Operator of the Year, awarded by Kylie Freeland, Managing Director of McDonald’s NZ & Pacific Islands, recognises a top performing operator. The successful recipient of this award will be recognised not only for their contribution as an operator, but also as a leader within the community, and as a true brand ambassador.

Over 35 Years ago (in 1988), Lynley was recruited to help open the new McDonald’s Restaurant in George St Dunedin. One year later she was a trainee manager, before being promoted to Restaurant Manager in 1996. In this time, she was instrumental in planning and organising the opening of two additional restaurants in Dunedin and even won Restaurant Manager of the Year. For her efforts, she was then promoted into the role of Operations Manager role taking care of the Dunedin Market. Lynley then moved up to McDonald’s Head Office as a Business Consultant during 2009 and 2010, before taking the opportunity to become a franchisee and open a new restaurant in Taumaranui, she then moved into the Far North market. Now, Lynley owns and operates all six McDonald’s Restaurants in the Northland region: Kerikeri, Kaikohe, Kaitaia North, Raumanga, Whangarei, and Kamo.

Even after all these years Lynley is still a regular consumer of McDonald’s burgers, with her personal favourite being the Kiwiburger, which is still on the menu from time to time.

Lynley puts her success down to growing and developing strong restaurant teams, with excellent managers and teams underneath them running her six restaurants. She says that seeing people grow and develop and watching them succeed and helping them on their own career journey is the most rewarding part of running her business. Lynley decided that a career in McDonald’s was her destiny owing to the energy and excitement in the brand, the opportunities for travel around the world, and most importantly, the way the Macca’s people build their life around the brand, and how the people you work with generally end up forming your social circle as well.

McDonald’s is a business which is often employing people for their first experience in the work force and Lynley says that if they put the time and effort in to learn the McDonald’s way of teamwork, discipline and other skills they stand themselves in a strong position for whatever future role or career path they decide to pursue.

“Whether someone is with us for a short time, a long time, or a lifetime, we aim to have people leave the business with skills that will be relevant to them in the future” she says.

Lynley is also very focussed on giving back to the community, sponsoring Kerikeri High School’s premier sports teams and is actively involved with local Hospice fundraising events and other fundraising activities from McDonald’s preferred non-profit charity, Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC), which provide free accommodation for families of sick children who require hospitalisation away from their home location.

Lynley has a passion for the brand which is infectious, and says she expects the next 35 years to be as fun as the last.