

Big Picture Student Portrait

ALEX CLEGG

YULE BROOK COLLEGE BIG PICTURE GRADUATE

Prior to Yule Brook College and Big Picture, Alex attended Bramfield Park Primary School. Bramfield Park is a traditional primary school in the Maddington community. In 2007 Alex enrolled at YBC for his first year of high school.

YBC is a Big Picture inspired school. Big Picture schools are small by design where students work in small groups on individual learning plans.

These schools encourage students to follow their passions and this includes completing an internship with an adult mentor.

Initially Alex did not know what his passion was so he explored his choices. Starting with mediaeval history Alex studied castles and Vikings while making two model castles, a boat, a shield and a sword.

Losing interest in mediaeval history after a term Alex went on to his next interest area of motorbikes. Alex then moved into differentials and spent a term pulling a differential apart in the room next to his classroom. This process helped Alex realise that his passion is motorbikes.

Alex's first internship was at Grumma's Racing, a motorbike mechanic shop. After a very successful time there Alex came to the end of his placement and went looking for a new internship site. It was at Southern River Motorcycles where Alex found a strong connection with his mentors George and Rose and happily finished the last three terms of the school year.

Mentors have a very important part to play in an internship; Alex's first mentor, Graham, helped develop his interest in

dirt bikes by teaching him how to repair bikes, while his second, George, gave Alex the whole deal from the mechanical work to running a business. A mentor becomes like a second parent to the mentee because they want you to learn and succeed in life.

George Varkonyi was Alex's mentor and now employer. When George was first approached to take Alex he was very apprehensive because he had a lot of people who wanted to do work experience there. When working with bikes mechanics must be very accurate or it could put a life at risk and there are no second chances given.

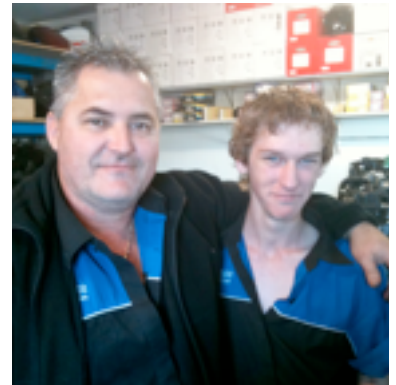
George was glad it was Alex who approached him for an internship because, "You can teach someone everything but you can't teach loyalty, work ethic and respect", he said. Alex held all these and it was these qualities that inspired George. George was happy to pass down his knowledge he learnt over time to a student with so much potential.

This resulted in George offering Alex an apprenticeship, which Alex jumped at. In fact in time George may even offer Alex the business, such is the admiration George has for his protégé.

At YBC Alex found the learning more effective than traditional schools because the Big Picture program let him learn what he wanted through his own style of learning. Alex worked hard because he wanted to succeed in life; he had the support he needed from his teachers, parents who cared and importantly his mentor.

Since leaving YBC Alex has been working hard at his apprenticeship, riding his dirt bike and hitting the gym.

In ten years Alex sees himself still a motorcycle mechanic, hopefully at Southern River Motorcycles.



(Alex and mentor George)



(Alex looking over a motorbike)

The advice Alex recommends to students is follow your passion, don't give up on it and earn about what you want to learn about.

Parents should support their child by encouraging them to pursue their passion, helping them learn about it and letting them explore their options; don't make decisions for them.

By Onavia Cornea
(Year 9 student Yule Brook College) 2011