



Time to support dyslexia group

This year, the Cookie Time Christmas Cookies campaign is raising money for the Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand.

Money from every bucket of cookies sold this year will go to the Cookie Time Charitable Trust, which is dedicated to helping New Zealand kids discover their gifts.

As principal sponsor of Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand (DFNZ), this includes supporting initiatives designed to nurture and celebrate the creative power dyslexia can deliver in innovative thinking, artistic ability, creative problem solving and entrepreneurship.

Dyslexia affects an estimated one in 10 New Zealanders, and it is something for which no government funding is available.

While it can bring learning challenges which so often leads to low self-esteem, the flipside is creative potential.

One of the myths of dyslexia is that it is just a problem with reading and writing. In fact it can affect a whole spectrum of skills from literacy and numeracy through to auditory and visual perception, planning and organising, motor skills, short-term memory and concentration.

However, DFNZ chair of trustees

Guy Pope-Mayell says when dyslexia is understood and addressed, those who have the condition have a lot to offer to a wide range of disciplines, from arts and design to engineering, technology and science.

“Just this month, new research from Middlesex University in the UK has shown a link between dyslexia and improved ability to judge space and process 3D visual information — a link the researchers suggested could explain the artistic

ability of famous artists Leonardo da Vinci, Pablo Picasso and Auguste Rodin,” Guy says.

He says this link means people with dyslexia could not only have artistic abilities, but valuable skills for the workforce.

“It has a wide range of applications in our increasingly IT-led world and can spark exactly the kind of innovative thinking and creative problem solving that is needed to drive success.

“This research also comes on top of a wealth of other findings which support the link between

dyslexia and creativity, as well as brain research and MRI imaging that shows dyslexic individuals process information in the opposite side of the brain than neuro-typical word-based thinkers. For this reason, dyslexia is now regarded as a learning preference rather than disability,” he says.

DFNZ has begun a 4D schools programme which provides guidance on how to benefit children with dyslexia, as well as helping others with learning differences. The programme is based on a “notice and adjust” approach, encouraging teachers to notice where issues are occurring and adjust the classroom environment or teaching style to help children reach their full potential.

“Small changes make a big difference in helping dyslexic

children thrive, some as simple as using a dyslexic friendly font, or giving verbal instructions rather than written. In this way, simple adjustments to everyday activities can make life much easier for dyslexics,” Guy says.

Many talented New Zealanders are dyslexic, including Weta Workshop’s Richard Taylor, New Zealand Idol life coach Sian Jacquet, the Mad Butcher Peter Leitch, and the late maverick motorcycle designer John Britten.

