

JOB MARKET

A career that just blossomed



Photo: JOHN NICHOLSON/FAIRFAX NZ

A walk in some gardens sparked a giant change as Rebecca Lee began her new life in New Zealand.

REBECA (Bok hee) Lee's life has been turned upside down since she came to New Zealand from Seoul to learn English.

Part-way through a four-year degree at Myong-Ji university, majoring in international business and trade, she intended to spend a year here learning English to get a "better job" upon graduating.

But within 12 months the 32-year-old fell in love, and she discovered her passion for flowers.

"I first met my [now] husband Yang in Dunedin where I studied English and as soon as he graduated from Otago Polytechnic he moved to Wellington.

"I didn't want to be separated from him so as soon as I graduated in Korea I came back to Wellington to be with him.

"In Seoul I was an office worker, my job was related to trading, which is why I decided to major in international business and trade. When I came to Wellington, I thought about what kind of job I would do here, I kept thinking about what I liked the most and I couldn't really figure out what I really enjoyed and what I was passionate about."

A trip to the Wellington Botanic Gardens changed all that.

"I went to botanic gardens one day and I realised I didn't take any other photos, I kept taking photos of the flowers, I took 100 or 200 photos of flowers, not of anything else.

"After that I really loved flowers. On the internet I looked at how to do flower arrangements better. I would practice at home and I would buy flowers and come home and practice arranging them from clips on You Tube. It's not easy to arrange flowers."

She picked up a job as a deli assistant at Newtown New World, but her boss, now the Chaffers New World owner, knew of her desire to work with flowers.

Several months later she jumped at the chance to move to Chaffers' floristry department.

Ms Lee is now floristry manager, looking after a staff of four in her department, and she's just earned her National Certificate in Floristry level 4 (advanced).

To top it off, at the recent Foodstuffs Training Awards in Wellington she not only received her national certificate, she also received special recognition for her fantastic work with flowers.

Sense of vocation: Rebecca Lee is enthusiastic about her work as a florist.

Ms Lee's manager Linda Sugijarta describes her as a fast learner, a hard worker and excellent when it comes to customer service.

"It's not my own country here, I have to prove my ability," Ms Lee says. "I try my best to work hard and show my attitude, so that I really, really am good and belong."

"When I'm serving customers I am always welcoming, I like interacting with them, and if someone thinks I am good at customer service, it's because I do really enjoy it, it's from my heart, I don't feel like it's my work."

Floristry isn't all that Ms Lee is focused on, she's also studying for her national certificate in business, or First Line Management level 3 as it's called.

While it's unusual – and difficult – to be holding down a 45-hour-a-week job and training in two different areas at once, Ms Lee simply says she has the time and makes the most of it.

"Last year I realised I could complete one [floristry] level and start immediately on another, so this year I really set the goal of finishing it all within a year.

"I really wanted to do the management course as well. I knew it was going to be tough – sometimes I would do assignments overnight and have no sleep.

"It has been a tough year for me, but I'm really happy with my results."

Studies aside, in her day job at New World she visits the Tawa flower markets twice a week to source her flowers, serves customers and creates arrangements.

"We do all kinds of arrangements, funerals, Christmas arrangements, corsages, buttonholes, posies . . . I love making up wedding bouquets the most."

Ms Lee gets plenty of satisfaction from visiting the flower markets too, despite having to be out of bed at 5am.

"It's a happy job, the quality of the flowers, the new seasonal flowers make me really happy. At the moment it's peony season and when I see the new flowers it makes me feel very happy and energised," she laughs.

Of all the flowers she loves roses the most.

"When a customer asks what flowers I like best and I say I really love the red roses, they always seem a little bit disappointed because it is a really common flower.

"In my opinion most people, even though they might not be interested in flowers, love roses because they are beautiful."

Ms Lee says she aims to constantly impress her customers and is striving to be the best florist both in Wellington and New Zealand.

"To have customers come to our department for the quality of the flowers and for our arrangements, that's my goal."

Yet just five years ago in Korea her goal was to be an office worker.

"I didn't imagine being a florist, but I really love it, and I really appreciate everything – at the moment I'm a florist manager, I have some skills, I love the flowers – I really feel like it's amazing, a miracle."

Much of her success, she says, is due to her husband.

"He supports me so much, he encourages me so much – without his support I couldn't have done this."

Q+A

QUICK QUESTIONS

NAME: Bok-hee Lee (Rebecca Lee).

BORN: South Korea. 12.12.1981.

FIRST JOB: Office worker in Kumho tyre company.

FAVOURITE MOVIE: *Notting Hill*.

FAVOURITE SONG: *She* by Elvis Costello. I am also a huge fan of Seung-Gi Lee who is a famous singer in Korea and Asia.

FAVOURITE FOOD: Korean barbecue with kimchi.

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Please apply in writing to Leah Garea, HR Manager, Geneva Healthcare, leahg@genevahealth.com

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EEO Employers Group

Environmental Planning Manager

The Kāpiti Coast District Council is looking for a suitably motivated and experienced senior leader to fill the role of Environmental Planning Manager.

This is an interesting and rare opportunity for anyone looking for a role in Local Government, where you can apply your vision and leadership in partnership with a passionate community. Kāpiti is Wellington's fastest growing district and a highly desirable area to live in.

The Environmental Planning Manager, is an integral position in the Strategy and Partnerships team and plays a major role in the future planning and sustainable development of the district.

The key responsibilities in this role are to:

- Lead the community planning process for the management of development within the District
- Provide advice to elected members on development management matters with reference to the Long Term and District Plans and legislative requirements
- Develop, review and monitor associated strategies and policies that relate to the Council's strategic programme and outcomes.

We are looking for an experienced leader who will have:

- Demonstrated success as a senior manager in strategic and environmental planning roles
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- Excellent stakeholder relationship management skills
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- The ability to work as part of a close knit team.

Applicants will need to undergo the usual pre-employment criminal history check. Further information about the positions and application documents are published on our website at <http://www.kapiticoast.govt.nz>

Please note you must be eligible to work in New Zealand. Applications close 12 noon, Friday 20 December 2013 and interviews will be held the week beginning 6 January 2014.

Kāpiti Coast DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Key Appointments

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