



20th
anniversary

20 YEARS OF INSPIRATION

A man with short dark hair, smiling, is positioned on the right side of the frame. He is wearing a black polo shirt with white stripes on the sleeves. The background is a server room with racks of equipment. On the left, there are blue and yellow network cables plugged into a switch. A white device is mounted on a rack above the switch. In the bottom left corner, a white device is labeled 'CLOUD CORE ROUTER CCR-1B16'. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

“THE THING I
LOVE MOST IS
CONNECTING
PEOPLE”.

JAMES WATTS
FOUNDER/CEO

1998 - 2002

When he was eight, born-and-bred Palmerstonian James Watts built his first computer. It was the first step in a life-long passion.

Some years later, while trying to help a friend fix an internet connection and being told how important his call was, despite it never being answered, James and his flatmate Jared convinced themselves they could do it better.

In 1998 they formed Inspire Net. Their ambition was to provide competitively priced Internet access to the Manawatu region, with better service than other providers, no 4-hour-on-hold-calls, and a level of customer service that would be difficult for competitors to match.

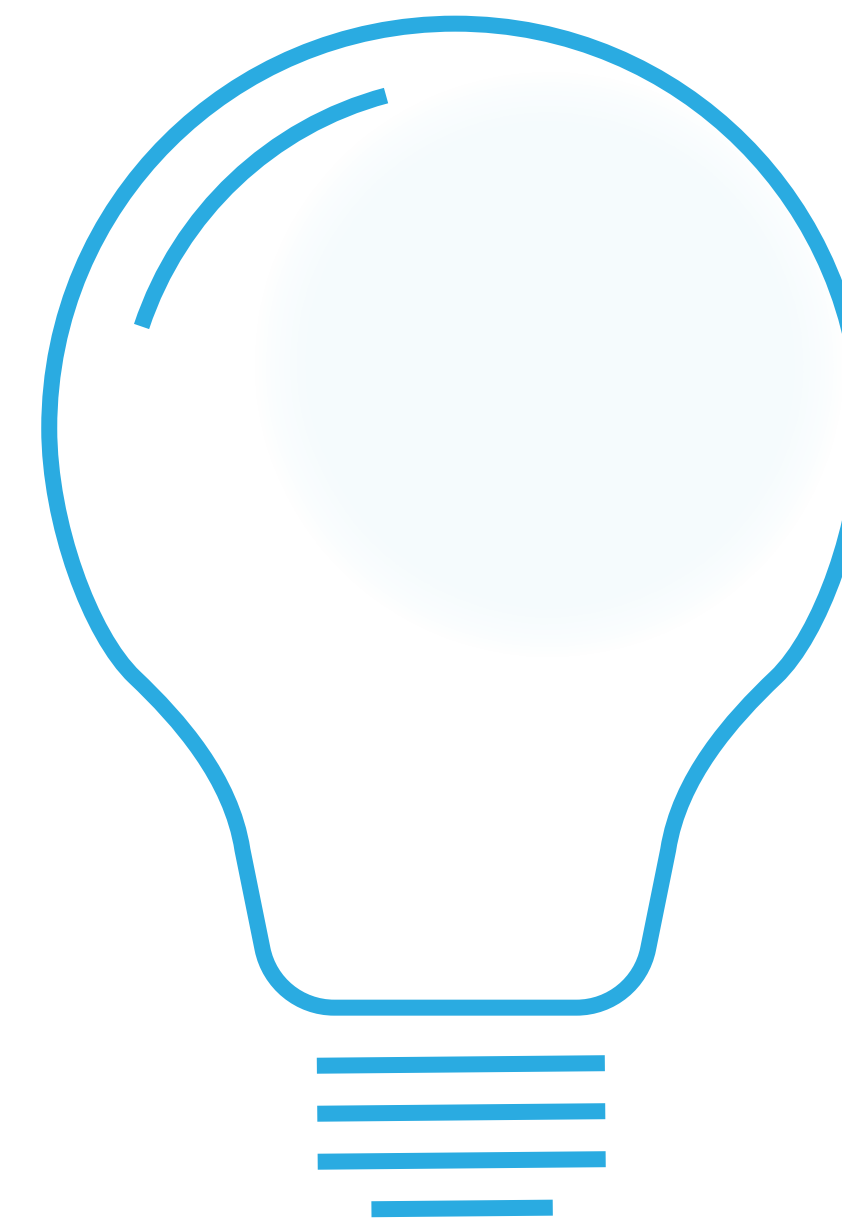
It's a tale of hard work, 90-hour weeks, sleepless nights and creative thinking. Balancing his day job as a sparky with working from home at night managing the newly formed company, it wasn't long before James and his new company had out-scaled all the business plans they'd made. The business bought a commercial-grade internet connection and phone lines from Telecom. Dial-up plans were the only option at the time (\$10 for 20 hours and \$35 for 100 hours), and Inspire had 30 phone lines connected.

News of the ISP spread by word of mouth and it wasn't long before they couldn't keep up with the number of people signing up. The original aim was to have 2500 customers in the first two years, but that target was reached in the first four months, showing just how keen Manawatu was to have a locally run ISP.





The Tremaine Ave
garage/office,
where it all started.



A dedicated office space was fast becoming an urgent priority, so the small team moved from the Tremaine Avenue house into the property's new garage. The garage housed a car or two at one end, but at the other end was a large area that was home to the compact first official Inspire Net office. It had 38m² of office space plus the kitchen, hallway and of course bathroom facilities, and a separate 10m² server room. Having a dedicated office space gave customers somewhere to visit to register a new connection and pay their bills in person, rather than leaving cash in the letterbox.

Y2K, awards & a move

Y2K arrived and IT systems didn't fall over. Inspire Net had tweaked and tested throughout 1999, and had anticipated no problems and so they, along with the rest of the technological world, survived the critics dire predictions. At about 12.05am though, on January 1st 2000, the New Zealand Internet sent more outbound than inbound traffic for the first time ever, as the world wanted to know if the first nation to experience the millennium survived Y2K. Alongside Singapore, New Zealand had the highest user ratio in the Asia Pacific region and the uptake was spurred on by some fierce competition delivering free dial-up access and new flat-rate options.

The motivation for James has always been service, and the speed, quality and competitiveness of that service. That dedication was rewarded after four years when Inspire Net won the Highly Commended Best ISP award at the Net Guide Web Awards in Auckland in November 2002.

The need for new premises became a big priority and Inspire Net left the Tremaine Ave backyard venture transferring the 1,920 Dial-up lines to their new Main Street building in 2002. We expanded our helpdesk, formed a web design company (Inspired Web Solutions) and built a much larger server room. Sharing the building with other businesses, the new office was in the heart of the Palmerston North CBD, close to The Square and more importantly close to George Street and the surrounding cafes which fuelled and continue to fuel the Inspire Net team with their daily coffee needs.



2003 - 2007

By March 2003 Inspire Net was trialling the new Inspire MetroLan wireless network, which in the beginning was aimed at schools and businesses. Wireless was also to be on offer to the rural community by the end of the year, meaning faster connections for those who couldn't get ADSL. It was a network being built by the government and Inspire Net became the fourth reseller of the service in February 2004.

The building of Inspire Net's own high speed fibre optic network began in October 2003. It was the beginning of the long-term goal James had of having fibre running into every home and building in Palmerston North. A lot of business customers were migrating to Wellington to make use of CityLinks network, so he decided Inspire would build their own fibre infrastructure, giving local businesses internet comparable to that available in Auckland and Wellington. It also meant some of the fibre could be donated to the city for CCTV cameras, which Inspire installed and still maintains now, helping to keep the Palmerston North CBD community protected and safe.

"High-speed fibre optic network"



By 2004 the customer base had expanded to more than 10,000 and a Consumer survey rated us the best provider, with a 98% customer satisfaction rating.

The shared tenancy in the Main Street building ended in December 2004 and the Inspire Group of companies decided to take over the entire floor space to fit the ever-expanding team. The group customised the building with minor renovations to the upstairs floor, creating specialist team areas and better use of the space for staff to work in.

Inspire Net firmly believes in sharing its success by supporting the local community both in business and services. Giving back has always been high on Inspire Net's list and one way for James to do that was to support organisations as he heard about them, and help out where he could. There's never been much recognition required from James - just the fact that he was giving back and helping to keep the community connected and a great place to live, work and play was always more than enough.

James loves connecting people, and an area he feels very passionate about is in education, giving every child the same opportunities. Inspire Net provided local schools and healthcare providers with fibre, giving them the fastest internet available in New Zealand at the time.

The Student City initiative, created a little later in 2006, started connecting the entire Massey University campus, including lecture theatres, classrooms, library and student accommodation. The service was designed as prepay to overcome the risk of a transient student population, which was essential to the success of the service. Having started with a very successful pilot, the service was rolled out to all the halls of residence and then, because of high demand, it was propagated over the wireless network in Palmerston North, giving wifi to about 1400 students in the Palmerston North CBD.




December brought a new General Manager to the Inspire Team, freeing up James' time to pursue the fibre optic network in and around Palmerston North. Inspire broadband services now ranged from ADSL through to Inspire fibre and MetroLan wireless.

Building renovations to the office at 325 Main Street started in January 2007 and were completed in February. They improved the area where the helpdesk operated, providing a relaxed environment for customers visiting. At the same time, the old telephone system was replaced to provide a better service to customers calling the toll-free number.

Local healthcare providers caught on to the benefits of fibre and understood fast broadband was the way forward. Palmerston North Hospital and a large number of private clinics and providers were hooked into Inspire Net's fibre network. It was a huge step for healthcare providers to become more efficient in transferring information and data, with X-rays received and viewed online within seconds.

The work in 2007 was such a success that Inspire Net spent the next few years expanding further around the greater Manawatu area north up past Taihape. This included expanding the Student City network to the Linton and Waiouru Army Camps, giving soldiers roaming wifi within the greater Manawatu at wireless spots and hassle-free roaming when travelling between bases. This was the beginning of a longstanding relationship to provide students and army personnel with internet access. Ohakea and Whenuapai bases were added later in 2011.



PRE-PAY BROADBAND

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Plan	Usage	Price
Lite	30GB	\$27 ⁵⁰ Per month
	100GB	\$37 ⁵⁰ Per month
	300GB	\$65 Per month

We also have Inspire Daily plans available: \$10 for 1-day of internet access and Inspire Weekender plans: \$15 for 3-days of internet access

For support call: 0800 484 363

To find out more and sign up, head to inspireprepay.net.nz

Find us on  facebook.

2008 - 2012

James reached out to farmers in Mangamaire, a small rural community halfway between Pahiatua and Eketahuna on the drag down State Highway 2. They grasped the opportunity to get high-speed broadband under the Fibre-to-the-Farm broadband network initiative launched in December 2008. He offered free fibre offcuts to the farmers if they used their machinery to dig the trenches. This initiative was an innovative way to get rural areas connected and it attracted national media, as well as a visit from John Key.

Stepping back into the day-to-day running of Inspire Net, after a break of a couple of years spent building the large fibre-optic network in Tararua, James carried on with developing wireless networks from Waiouru to Palmerston North and from Norsewood to Eketahuna.

It also expanded south to Levin and Inspire Net consolidated its reputation as the most popular service provider in the greater Manawatu. The growth meant Inspire Net had to do some extensive internal upgrading. The server room started its upgrade, to double the capacity by installing a new fully redundant 90kVA UPS, 250kVA generator, at the same time upgrading the room's air conditioning and power infrastructure. The reception area had another overhaul too.





2011 was huge for New Zealand and Inspire Net. The Rugby World Cup brought thousands of visitors to New Zealand and Palmerston North was no exception. With the influx of people and active internet users to the greater Manawatu, the Palmerston North City Council, Manawatu District Council, and Tararua District Council put one-off funding for 12 months towards providing limited free wifi for visitors to the Rugby World Cup. Inspire Net was responsible for creating the network, so once registered online, you could have up to 100Mb a month of free internet access on a mobile device using the wifi coverage.

Through 2011 Inspire Net focused on connecting as many homes to broadband as possible within what was now Inspire Land. They continued expanding the rural wireless broadband network and won a government grant to connect 14 rural schools that weren't connected under the 2009 government scheme.

Connecting schools into the Metrolan Wireless network was a social obligation James was happy to do, as he saw the kids in these schools as being the future workforce for the district and for companies like Inspire. The interest generated from communities around the schools keen to get connected inspired James to develop the Community Champions initiative. Typically, the Community Champion was a landowner or someone close to the school where the repeater was being installed. This kind of service was and continues to be really successful in reaching into small rural communities that have suffered over the years from a lack of broadband access, usually places where no other companies have wanted to connect.

2012 arrived and the Government got their Ultra-Fast Broadband Scheme moving, with an investment of \$1.5 billion to ensure fibre got to 75% of urban homes. Inspire Net signed up with Chorus and Ultrafast, the contractors who won the official government contracts for the greater Manawatu certifying Inspire Net as a national retail service supplier.

With both fibre and wireless connections increasing, by 2013 the team was busier than ever. More than 200 rural towers had been installed, equating to more than 2000 rural properties being connected, many through the help of their area Community Champion.

2013 - Now

Because the grouped Councils' funding for Central Free WiFi ended after 12 months, James decided to continue providing the network on his own. By August 2013 he had called it Inspire Free WiFi, and created a new website enabling the 16,000 or so registered devices and customers to continue accessing the network, as well as allowing them to use their home Inspire broadband plan if they wanted to. By this time, availability had expanded to include Whanganui, and more access points in and around the towns around the Central North Island.

James' consistent dedication to connecting the community led him to attend the UCOL Palmerston North Graduation Ceremony in March 2014, to receive his Honorary Associate Award. It's an award made for people who have made significant and distinguished contributions to the wider community of which UCOL is part. This award is just one that James and Inspire Net have received, although the sheer number of them seems surprising to those who know James because he's never been one to brag, and isn't keen to be the centre of attention or heading out into the public eye. All these awards represent the innovations, passion and excellence in service that has always been with Inspire Net, because of James, his family and his team.

In November 2014 a new GM was appointed to take Inspire Net to its next level, to ensure the company had systems and structures in place to meet its growing business. James wanted someone he could trust and understood what he wanted to achieve, so Paul (James' older brother) took the role on after a number of years in various other management roles. He does all the things James hates doing :)



Paul - General Manager

The first step was to look at Inspire Net's structure and where it was heading. At that time, there was a staff of 24. A few tweaks to show how things were working around wireless installs and bookings were a great improvement. The next thing to go under the microscope was how to let staff grow inside the business. Traditionally help desk staff completed about three years service and then had nowhere to progress to.

Through 2015-16 some new tier two roles were created for staff to move into and increase their skills, as well as ensuring business customers had an escalation path. The help desk also started opening from 7am to meet customer demand. As the company grew we needed to increase our brand awareness so created a new role of Brand and Design manager to increase Inspire Net's profile and to standardise customer facing processes. A sales consultant was employed to call on businesses and promote our voice phone services, and an Infrastructure Division was created at our Campbell Street workshop. As well as this, the NOC team was increased from within the existing team as well as adding a new role. In three years the company has grown from a team of 24 to a staff of 38 and still growing. Throughout this process the focus has been on staying the friendly, small team that helps customers and provides the service everyone is so proud of.

Towards the end of 2016 Inspire Net decided it needed a facelift. The design and brand manager created a new design concept and colour scheme for the outside of the building, resulting in a much more modern look that makes the signage really stand out. With the new design, some extra building work was needed to make enough room to showcase the large new LED logo at the front. A start was also made on freshening up the inside of the building with some new paint and artwork on the meeting room walls.

We're still expanding Inspire Land, and installing our own fibre into several new subdivisions. As of 2018, we have installed cabinets and are busy signing up more and more customers at Woodgate Heights, Hiwinui, Waitarere Rise, Halcombes Mountain Views and Speldhurst Country Estate over in Levin.





Spirit of the Manawatu Award

At the Westpac Manawatu Business Awards in 2016, the team were very happy to receive the 'Spirit of the Manawatu Award', against some stiff competition from Mitre10 Mega Palmerston North and OBO Goalkeeping, both of which also do an amazing job supporting the community.

Thanks are really due to the whole team for their support. They make Inspire Net what it is, and it wouldn't happen without them. There were many other award recipients on the night including Arohanui Hospice, who Inspire Net sponsor and who do an amazing job in our community, and DC Power who won several awards, including the Supreme Business Award, we like to think aided by their great internet service!.

Inspire Net
Limited

2016

Spirit of the
Manawatu Award

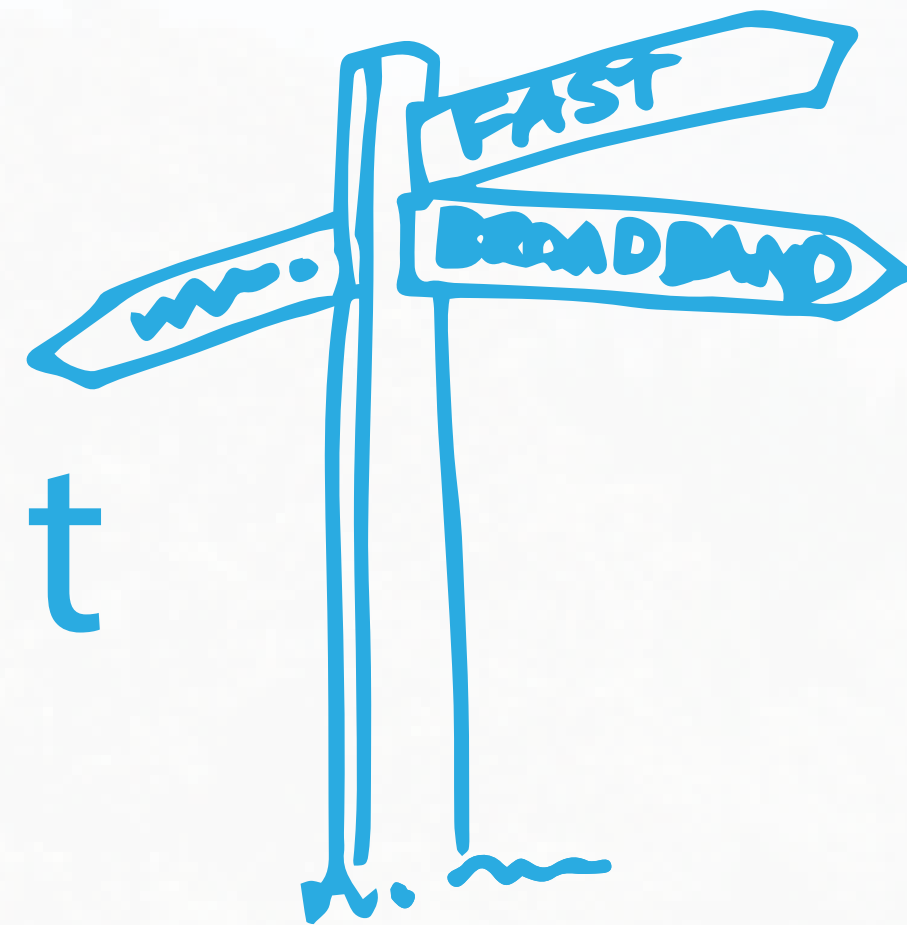


Ronald McDonald House, Auckland

In 2016 the company was approached by a member of our community who had a child at Starship Hospital. They mentioned the need for easily accessible Internet access in the family accommodation, so families could contact loved ones and keep in touch while away from home. Inspire Net worked with Ronald McDonald House on a partnership programme and headed to Auckland to install a managed wifi network at the two Ronald McDonald Houses in Auckland. The programme includes covering all installation and connectivity costs for the next three years, and providing support through the Palmerston North help desk. It's an exciting partnership and hopefully it will provide some comfort to those families.

There's been some amazing feedback and a wonderful thank you letter written by some of the children staying there. James is a big believer that connectivity changes lives, and to help all these people in a time when they need it is one of the reasons he still drives Inspire Net to connect people anywhere possible. Since the network at Ronald McDonald House was installed, it has averaged 230 users a day, and is being used for everything from parents video calling each other for support and children talking to a parent, caregiver or friend that can't be there with them, through to school work, and of course all the usual Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat and YouTube you expect from young people. Ronald McDonald House does an amazing job helping children and families.

Government funding



Inspire Net won \$1.7 million in government funding in 2017 to help connect rural New Zealanders in and around the region. This money will go towards upgrading about 1550 of the company's most remote end users. The company will also contribute, at about 2.5 to 1, to upgrade about 4500 end users who aren't covered by UFB2, or the surprise announcement of UFB2+. All wireless users on the current 5Mbit service will be upgraded to a 25Mbit service in the next four years, allowing them to run streaming services such as Netflix, and Skype for Business.

[Read more about the government grant funding here.](#)



Some of the amazing things we support.

RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE CHARITIES

We are big believers that connectivity changes lives, and are so proud to help all of these families with sick children to keep in touch at a time when they need it the most.



Keeping families close™

PALMERSTON NORTH HOSPITAL

Whether you are receiving treatment, in for a short time or visiting a friend or family member, we thought we could do better and have provided unlimited free wifi internet.



AROHANUI HOSPICE

Internet connectivity enables patients and families to connect with loved ones while they are receiving hospice care, and we think that's definitely something worth sponsoring.



LIFE EDUCATION TRUST

Life Education Trust successfully delivers health and nutrition lessons to more than 4,000 children throughout our local area using their mobile classroom. We think that's amazing.

sponsorship continued...

CENTREPOINT THEATRE

Centrepont Theatre creates shows that inspire, challenge and entertain. We love having a theatre in our home town, and are proud to support them.

The logo for Centrepont Theatre, featuring the word "centrepont" in a lowercase, bold, sans-serif font, with "THEATRE" in a smaller, uppercase, bold, sans-serif font directly below it.

THE KIMBOLTON SCULPTURE FESTIVAL

This event is a colourful and vibrant celebration of the land and will provide incentives for farmers in our rural communities to improve their health and wellbeing by getting creative.

The logo for the Kimbolton Sculpture Festival, featuring a stylized white leaf or flower icon above the text "KIMBOLTON Sculpture Festival" in a serif font.

Manawatu Digi Awards

THE DIGI AWARDS

The Inspire Net Manawatu Digi Awards is a student eLearning competition and awards evening held in the Manawatu. We're proud to support children and technology.

The logo for Te Manawa, featuring the words "Te Manawa" in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with "art science history PALMERSTON NORTH" in a smaller, lowercase, sans-serif font below it.

TE MANAWA MUSEUM

At the cultural heart of our city Te Manawa draws art, science and history together, recognising the uniqueness of each area and reflecting our growing region and its people.

and a few more...

THE JETS

We came back on board this year as a sponsor of the Jets basketball team. We're huge supporters of giving kids role models to look up to, and we're proud to support the boys again for 2018.



CENTRAL DISTRICTS FIELD DAYS

Proud to provide Free wifi to this event and support our rural community who play a large part in the success of Inspire Net.



SQUASH GYM

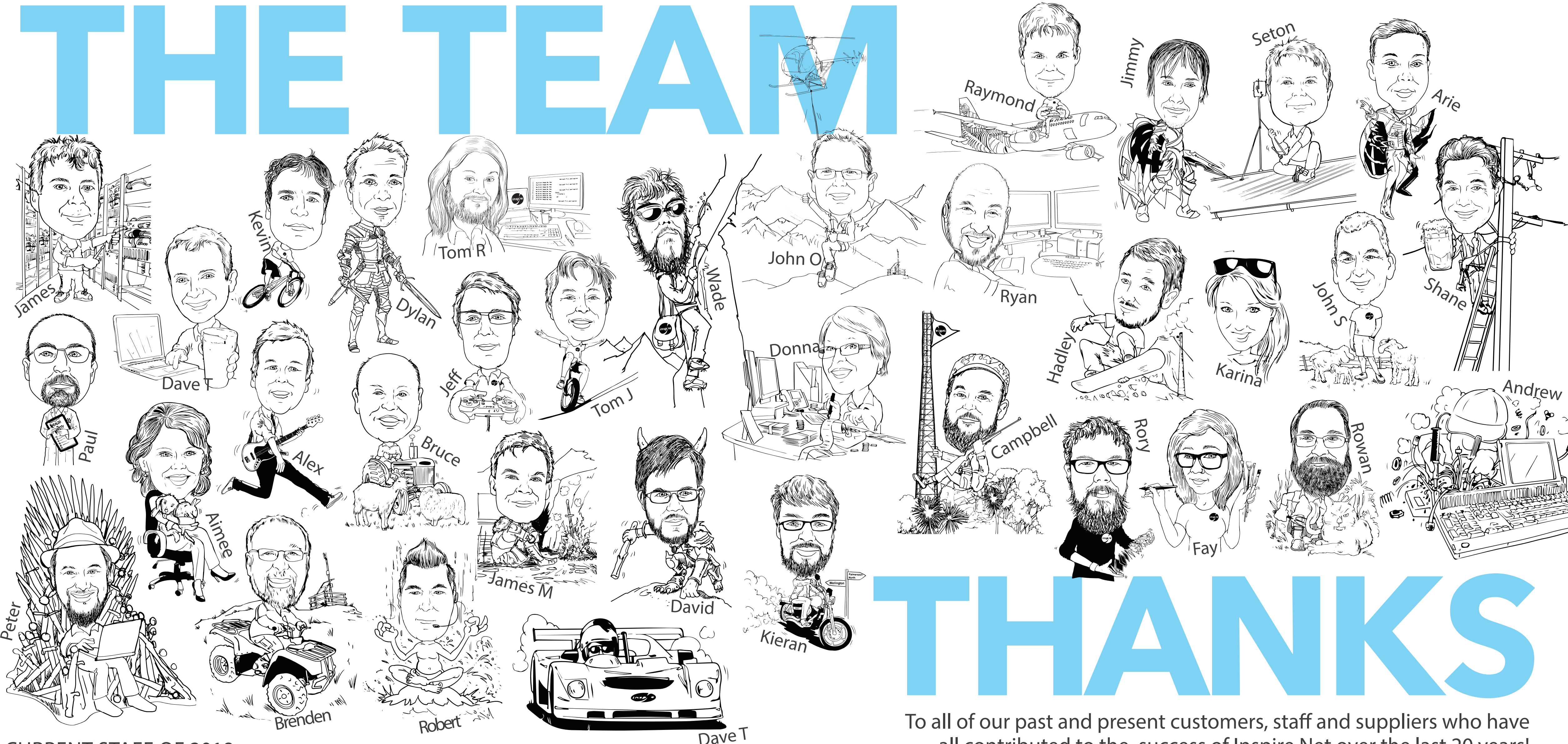
Inspire Net is proud to be, for more than a decade, the principal and naming sponsor of the Inspire Net Squash Gym, Linton Street, Palmerston North.



THE GLOBE

The Globe is one of the best community theatres in New Zealand and we are proud to support them as we think they're another great reason to live in the Manawatu.

THE TEAM



THANKS

To all of our past and present customers, staff and suppliers who have all contributed to the success of Inspire Net over the last 20 years!

CURRENT STAFF OF 2018

James has demonstrated that good ideas can succeed if you have the entrepreneurial drive. The focus is on identifying opportunities. They go through a selection process involving James' wife, who is a partner in the business, and who as a non-technical filter makes 'sanity tests' to make sure the idea will be profitable and practical. The technical team then have their say, to challenge the concepts and find weaknesses or suggest alternatives to achieve the service outcome. It's a process that has worked well.

The Inspire Net team is made up of people who have been handpicked for their technical knowledge and excellent customer service skills, as well as a sense of humour. Providing good service has always been a priority and a big part of that is having a human on the other end of the phone when a customer calls. Helpdesk calls are not automatically screened or timed either - the focus is on getting requests or problems solved.

Through innovation, a "do whatever it takes" attitude and a core focus on service, Inspire Net has grown to become the preferred internet service provider in the region. Its reputation for mucking in, digging ditches and doing whatever it takes to provide customers with the best broadband in the region will definitely help to keep it there.



Fun facts:

- We have grown from the original Inspire Net Toyota Surf to a fleet of 11 vehicles, numerous trailers and two LUVs.
- More than 29% of our staff have been with Inspire Net for more than 10 years!
- More than 50% of our staff have been with Inspire Net for more than 5 years!
- The average age of the Inspire Net staff is 36 years old
- James still uses the same photo for news articles as he did 18 years ago - well it looks like he does!
- As technology changes, things like solar panels, wind turbines and radio equipment have become much more efficient and affordable.

THE HISTORY OF THE
INSPIRE NET LOGO



Thanks for coming on
this journey with us.

James and the team.