

Academy a life-changer for pair

BY JEN DILLNER
jenny.dillner@hbtoday.co.nz

From being two boys who would not look me in the eye at the beginning of the year, two now confident and eloquent young men recently told me their stories as to why they applied to the Flaxmere College Service Academy.

Kimete Stephens, Year 13 and Ngawaka Heremia-Harriman, Year 12 joined the inaugural academy at the beginning of this school year.

Both boys admitted they were not into school. Their attendance was atrocious and they knew when the academy was formed they either had to change their ways or fail.

"I needed to change my lifestyle to enable me to prepare myself for a career and my future," says Kimete.

Ngawaka too knew he was playing truant and needed to take a good look at himself.

"There was no way some of these children would have been standing in our final assembly receiving their leaving certificates if they had not been accepted into the academy," says administration executive Kathryn Simmons.

"The academy is about achieving in all aspects of schooling and life skills. These students surpassed even their own expectations throughout the year. The NCEA results are proof of their commitment," says Flaxmere academy director Joel Ngatuere.

When asked their proudest moment both boys agreed it was graduating from the induction course at Waiouru Army camp in March where they spent 12 days of intense discipline from 5am to 9pm.



ACHIEVERS: Kimete Stephens and Ngawaka Heremia-Harriman, cadets in the Flaxmere College Service Academy.

PHOTO: JEN DILLNER

"It was hard but to overcome the challenges was self rewarding. The march-out was one of the proudest moments in my life," says Ngawaka.

"I was so happy to make it to the end. A lot wanted to go home in the first few days. I was proud that we all made it," says Kimete.

When I asked what had been

the hardest challenge during the year, for Ngawaka it was fitness, having to do push-ups and running. Kimete said being yelled at when in the Waiouru camp, from the army personnel.

"I didn't expect it."

Kimete is applying to join the Army next year. Ngawaka is heading back to complete Year 13

with university and a teaching degree to look forward to in the future.

Both boys have made their families proud.

Kimete said he was the first in his family to make it through college, and Ngawaka's family could see the changes he had made throughout the year.

"Suddenly I was more involved with college and achieving results academically. I will definitely apply again for next year's intake."

■ **Flaxmere College Service Academy is taking applications for recruits for 2013. Phone Joel 879 9833 or email: joeln@flaxcol.co.nz.**