



Bringing More Koreans to Invercargill

■ By Michelle Waitzman

➔ Korean migrant, Bonsuk "Shawn" Koo, is heading back to Seoul for the next seven weeks. He's not just going to visit friends and family back home, he's also going to convince more Koreans to join him in his adopted home of Southland, New Zealand.

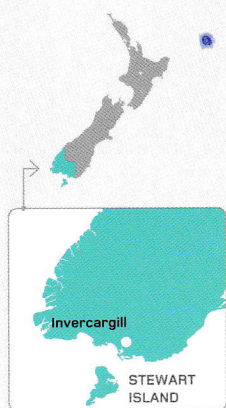
From the moment Shawn arrived in Invercargill as a student in 1996, he knew he had made the right choice. "The weather was good, clear skies, no pollution. You could see the stars!" he recalls. After the smog and crowds of Seoul, Southland offered the kind of lifestyle he loved. Friendly and small, Invercargill soon felt like home. Some of the Korean students who had lived there longer helped him to adapt to New Zealand life, and he also found support through his local church and the homestay families who hosted him.

Rather than feeling excluded, Shawn found Southland was a great place to learn the Kiwi

way of life. "In Southland everyone knows everyone," he explains. "It's like a big family. You get to know people quickly. It's friendlier because it's small, and it's a safe community."

It wasn't lifestyle that originally led Shawn to study in New Zealand. His first priority was learning English. "It has become an essential tool for doing business in the world today," he says. He also felt that the schools in New Zealand offered him more opportunities than he could have in Korea. Only a few top students get the best opportunities in Korea, while in New Zealand there are great opportunities for anyone who wants to learn.

Shawn began by studying English at the Southern Institute of Technology (SIT), and then spent a year studying towards a Certificate in Business. At that point, personal circumstances took him back to Korea for a few years, but he



was all set to come back to continue his studies later.

Returning in 2003 as a New Zealand resident, Shawn wasn't sure that he would go back to Invercargill. "I was planning to study at Otago University (in Dunedin), but then I found out about the 'zero fees' system at SIT and I went back to Invercargill instead." The "zero fees" scheme allows New Zealand residents to study at the Southern Institute of Technology without paying any tuition fees, which makes it a great opportunity for students.

These days Shawn is helping other students and migrants from Korea to experience the hospitality of Southland. His company, Koo New Zealand Ltd., helps Koreans who want to come to New Zealand to study or to live. He says they offer services to help with all aspects of migrating. This includes help with visa paperwork, finding a place to live, enrolling children in schools, and translating.

He works closely with Education Southland and Venture Southland to attract migrants from Korea. Together they have presented seminars to attract Koreans to Southland. Shawn finds that doing business in Southland is very friendly, and everyone works together for a common goal.

Learning New Zealand business culture was something that required professional help. When setting up his company, Shawn consulted with an accountant and a lawyer to make sure he got it right. "You have to know about the taxes and everything, to make sure you're following the rules." But he still finds New Zealand's business culture much easier to deal with than Korea's. "Here, there is no corruption, no bribery. The rules are very clear."

Living and working in Southland has been very rewarding for him. In fact, Shawn believes that for anyone who works hard, there are great opportunities in New Zealand. "In Korea, you can put in 99 percent effort, and get around 80 percent opportunity in return. But in New Zealand if you put in 99 percent effort, you get back 150 percent in opportunity!"

Shawn is also giving back to the community that has welcomed him for so many years. He acts as a Korean translator when needed by the local

police, hospitals, banks and schools. He knows first-hand that the language barrier can be the biggest problem new migrants face. Because he faced that problem himself, he now helps his clients to deal with it as well.



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To help his Korean students feel more at home when they come to Southland, Shawn has also hired women from Korea to work in student rental houses as caregivers. They can communicate with the students in Korean, make familiar foods and help make the transition easier on the students.

Everything he is doing to help Koreans migrate to Southland seems to be working. After helping to bring over around 200 Korean migrants, he says that very few decide to return home. The Korean community has grown in Southland over the past ten years, partly due to his efforts. There are now whole families living in the region, not just students. They have even opened a Korean church. While Invercargill may never be as popular with migrants as big cities like Auckland, it is beginning to attract a wider range of cultures. ■

Bringing a taste of Bavaria to Nelson

Kiwis love a "sausage sizzle." It's as much a part of their culture as rugby or pavlova. Usually sausages are sold to raise money for local charities or schools, so the most inexpensive sausages from the supermarket are grilled and served on slices of white, sandwich bread.

That came as quite a shock to German migrant, Doris Faulhaber. You see, sausages are a big part of her culture too. She grew up in the town of Wuerzburg in the Bavaria region of Germany, where local bratwurst sausage has a long and respected tradition. But when she travelled to New Zealand as a twenty-year-old seeking new experiences, her beloved bratwurst was nowhere to be seen.

Doris didn't come to New Zealand with big plans to bring bratwurst to

New Zealand. She was just enjoying some time exploring new places far from home. But when she met a young busker playing guitar on the streets of Rotorua, her plans changed forever. Andre was a Kiwi electrician, playing music to help make ends meet when work was slow. Doris and Andre fell in love in the steamy streets of Rotorua, and he followed her home to Germany over a year later.

After a few years back home, Doris and Andre decided to return to

New Zealand permanently, and sell Bavarian bratwurst sausages from a mobile shop. Doris had studied as an apprentice sausage-maker, and knew just what was required to make an authentic bratwurst. Andre had experience with running his own business, so he'd be able to take care of the paperwork. In 1996, they migrated once more to New Zealand.

The pair travelled around the South Island looking for the perfect place to launch their business. They ended



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DORIS FAULHABER
German immigrant



up choosing Nelson, mainly because the local City Council was open to their business idea. "Other councils didn't like the idea of a mobile shop selling food, because they didn't have anything like that," Doris explains. "Nelson already had the Nelson Market established, and at the time it was the only market like that in New Zealand."

The business in Nelson was so successful that they added a second location at the Arts Centre in Christchurch. Now Andre travels there every weekend to sell sausages.

Doris rented a commercial kitchen for a few hours each week to make her sausages, then sold them every weekend at the Nelson Market. At first, most of her customers were other German and Swiss migrants who'd been missing the European-style sausages served on baguettes. But as more New Zealanders tried the bratwurst, it became popular with the locals too. These days at least half of her customers in Nelson are New Zealand born, but she finds that her bratwurst grill is still a gathering place

for the newcomer community. "Even though I'm working, when I'm at the market it's like a socializing day. I get to talk to the other Germans who live in Nelson. Also, the people at the hotels and backpackers always send their German guests to see me!" she says.

The business in Nelson was so successful that they added a second location at the Arts Centre in Christchurch. Now Andre travels there every weekend to sell sausages. They have also set up their own kitchen, and gradually expanded the list of products they make and sell. After several people from out of town asked about buying their products, they started a mail-order business. While some supermarkets have been keen to carry Doris's products, she is keeping things small for now. She prefers selling directly to the customers so that she can ensure the freshness of her products.

Her bratwurst and other products are made fresh using meat from local butchers, with no gluten or other starchy fillers. While she uses as many local ingredients as she can, including sausage casings she buys from exporters who send most of their products overseas, there are some ingredients that she imports from Europe. Her spices are shipped in from Germany to make her products truly European in their flavour.

While Doris and Andre chose Nelson

for the business opportunities, she says they couldn't be happier with their new home. "The climate is wonderful; we only see the bad weather on TV. And there are lots of opportunities to go tramping and for walks. We've been here for many years, but I'm still exploring!"

Doris goes back to Germany regularly to visit friends and family, but she doesn't miss living there. "This is my home now. It doesn't happen overnight, it happens gradually." She finds that New Zealand is a friendlier, more community-oriented place to live than Germany.

Doris doesn't think that she would have been able to build a business back in Germany the way she has here. European bureaucracy would have made it almost impossible to establish her own sausage company. "It's a lot easier to start something from scratch here. You can try anything, and if it fails you try something else!"

