

Media Release

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A new year, a new start

The people of the Waitaha community in Te Puke used to see an ambulance passing through the village two or three times a week, but a new focus on healthy living for the whole community has greatly reduced the need for ambulances.

“Matariki (Maori New Year) was the perfect opportunity to make a change – a new year, a new start,” says Kaiwhakahaere (Waitaha Hauoranga Haoura Manager) Riaana Rameka. “We have so much going on now from people growing their own fruit and veggies to a recent walk up the Papamoa hills. More than 200 people joined that day from mothers with babies to Kuia and Kaumatua.”

Many people in the community, both young and old, suffer with chronic conditions such as asthma, emphysema, diabetes and eczema.

“There is someone from every household with one condition or another. We live very close to a swamp area as well as local kiwi fruit orchards which generate lots of pollen,” says Riaana.

The community applied for funding from the BOPDHB’s Maori Community Action Projects initiative to help them set up a healthy living programme for the whole community.

“We would have got a project up and running at some point, but this funding meant we could do it sooner,” says team leader Sandra Potaka. “There is a range of things people

can be involved in. We are getting people established and working together so that when the funding stops, everything is in place for them to keep the great work going.”

The money has gone towards equipment hire for the initial set up of household gardens, buying seeds and plants from the local garden centre, as well as other activities such as nutrition education and cooking classes with the BOPDHB community educator and chef Stephen Cameron.

More than 10 people have signed up for a chronic conditions health plan which includes an individual health assessment and 12 month treatment plan.

“Their goals are mainly around cutting down smoking and alcohol, and reducing unscheduled visits to the doctor and the emergency department.”

Waitaha doesn't have a large amount of land connected to their marae so they have set up more than 30 household gardens throughout the village.

Riaana says that one of the reasons the project is working so well is because the community wants to take action, and it is mainly the young people driving the changes.

“When we got everyone together, it was the young parents who said they wanted a better future for their kids,” she says. “They want their kids to be healthier and be able to grow and eat their own kai.”

ENDS



One of the biggest successes of the healthy living programme in Waitaha, Te Puke, is the tyre gardens. Kids at the local kohanga reo are leading the way in growing their own fruit and vegetables.

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