



DOUBLE THE FEET ON THE STREET

NZ Walking Conference 2008
4-5 August, Auckland

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Abstract Remit

Fitness, Fun and Fundraising have been combined in the Warkworth and Mahurangi East Push Play Neighbourhoods. Push Play Neighbourhoods are semi-rural communities working together to promote physical activity. A series of 5km walks have proved effective as a fundraising mechanism for local services as well as encouraging regular walking habits. This was the first time this type of activity has been tried in the area and it has met with great enthusiasm from the community.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The Push Play Neighbourhood project began in 2007 and in that year the project coordinator acted in a support role to the 2nd annual Heart Foundation Walk fundraiser in Warkworth. This walk involved over 300 people and raised approximately \$5000.00 for the National Heart Foundation. The success of this event prompted the idea of using walking for local fundraising for the Mahurangi East Volunteer Fire Brigade, a brigade set in the small neighbouring community of Snells Beach (population approximately 3500). The aim of the walks was to offer an evening walking option in the neighbourhood as well as raise money for the Brigade. This was a way to offer an activity to working people or those only free in the evenings which was also lacking in the community.

WHAT HAPPENED?

A four week series of walks was developed with a community member mapping out a suitable 5km route for the walks. It was decided that the same walk route be used for all four, with the final in the series using the same route but backwards. Participants were able to pay for the walks in a weekly basis or sign up for all 4 and get a bonus T-shirt and the last walk for free. Local businesses were approached to donate spot prizes and a barbecue and water was offered at the end of the walk. Walks were promoted through local newspapers, community radio, posters in shop windows and letterbox drops.

On average 50 participants joined the walk each week and \$855.00 was raised for the Fire Brigade in the month of March.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

A survey was completed by participants at the end of Week Three. Participants rated the walks very positively. Respondents were asked whether they would like to continue walking and how the walks could be improved. The majority fed back that they would like the walks to continue during daylight savings and a change of route every four weeks was acceptable. Due to the end of daylight savings the formal series of walks will be resumed after Labour Weekend with another focus on fundraising. In the months in between, the Push Play Neighbourhood will support the formation of a walking group with provision of 5km route maps and walk leaders. Gold coin donation is optional for the Fire Brigade. Community spirit has been increased through the walks and many participants found it a new physical challenge to complete the 5km course. It provided a healthy, family friendly alternative for Fire Brigade fundraising whose main charity income is from raffles.

CONCLUSION

Combining walking and fundraising was trialed very successfully in Warkworth in 2007 and in the month of March in Snells Beach 2008. The weekly Fire Brigade walks will be resumed in summer months as a regular community activity encompassed by the Push Play Neighbourhood project. Other groups in the community are now looking at replicating the model for their local organisations.

Author Profile

Bridget Farmiloe is employed by Harbour Health as the Push Play Neighbourhood Coordinator for Warkworth and Mahurangi East Districts. The Push Play Neighbourhood Project began in February 2007 and aims to increase physical activity within the neighbourhoods by five percent. It is a collaborative project funded by SPARC, Harbour Health, Coast to Coast PHO, Harbour Sport, Rodney District Council and ACC. Bridget has over ten years experience in health promotion with previous positions in Townsville Australia and ACC Injury Prevention. Now employed by Harbour Health, Bridget is enjoying working in her local community with the new Push Play Neighbourhood project. She is a keen walker and continues to explore how walking can improve community spirit and encourage family togetherness as well as fitness.

