

Background on 'Kāpiti Coast's Greenest Street'

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What is it?

'Kāpiti Coast's Greenest Street' Competition is a new event running from October 2010 to June 2011 where groups of neighbouring households from around the district will each work together to reduce their environmental footprints, have fun and make their street an even better place to live, with the help of the Kāpiti Coast District Council. The activities and experiences of the participants will be promoted to the wider public, generating enthusiasm and to encourage others to follow in their footsteps and adopt more sustainable lifestyles.

There are four streets competing:

- 'Kakariki Street' – an alliance of households in Tilley Rd, Te Miti St and Haumia Street in Paekākāriki that are in close proximity to each other
- Rainbow Court in Raumati South
- Avion Terrace in Raumati Beach/Paraparaumu
- Te Roto Road in Ōtaki

Together there are around 50 households directly involved. The Streets themselves set the agenda with regards to the activities they undertake. They will be assisted by Council officers and services such as the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Coordinator, Eco Design Advisor, Green Plumber and Green Gardener.

The judging panel will be Mayor Jenny Rowan, Kevin Milne of 'Fair Go' fame, Liana Stupples, director of the Hikurangi Foundation, Caleb Royal, a member of the faculty at the Te Wānanga-O-Raukawa in Ōtaki and Joy Darke, regional winner of NZ Gardener of the Year 2010. Judging will be based on how much the members reduce their environmental footprints and what they achieve together as a community over the course of the competition.

Why hold a 'Greenest Street' competition?

To make the district a better place to live:

Encouraging neighbours to get to know each other and work together builds social cohesion, improving people's lives, and resilience which will help them through crises such as the aftermath of a natural disaster. The types of activities the streets will undertake will involve energy and water conservation, waste reduction and recycling, tree planting, composting, carpooling and food growing, all things that enhance where we live by reducing pollution. The positive example set by the competitors, and the message of the importance of environmental sustainability and of having a degree of self-sufficiency within your neighbourhood, will be communicated to the district via newspaper, radio and websites. This will mean positive outcomes from the competition will spread far beyond the competitors themselves.

To advance the underlying health and wellbeing of the community:

The number and quality of social connections within a community has an important bearing on the mental and therefore physical health of the members of that community. So by encouraging people to get to know each other, we expect there will be positive health incomes. In a crisis situation social connections can be a literal lifesaver, or at least make a crucial difference in people's ability to cope.

There are links between the health of the natural environment and human health and wellbeing, such as air and water quality and having quality natural spaces for people to enjoy. Furthermore warmer homes, home grown food and active modes of transport such as walking and cycling, all have a direct and positive impact on the physical health of members of the community. Therefore by energizing people to undertake these actions and reduce their environmental impacts, the competition will contribute to health and wellbeing in the community.

To address future and emerging needs:

By encouraging neighbours to get to know each other, learn new practical skills, lower their environmental impacts and be more self sufficient, we are preparing them in the best way possible for a future where natural disasters will inevitably happen, resources are likely to become constrained and the need to conserve and protect the environment will only become more important.

To make a difference in the long term:

Through this competition we are investing in the long term and health and well being of the community, by fostering bonds of friendship and mutual support, protecting the environment and attempting to equip individuals and communities for whatever might come their way.

To develop the communities skills and knowledge:

We will assist competitors with acquiring new skills, such as vegetable gardening and other practical home skills. We will also build their knowledge of their environmental impacts and how these may be reduced.

To create positive change:

The exploits of the competitors will be publicized by the Council and by themselves to the wider district, to create a positive change through others following the example of the competitors.

To foster effective partnerships:

The groups will form a strong partnership with the Council who will help them to make their 'green' ideas happen. The streets themselves will be encouraged to find partners within their communities to assist them further, such as local schools, businesses and clubs.