

# Slam dunk

## New basketball court at Haruatai Park a hit in Ōtaki.

Wellington Saints basketball guard Jordan Mills called in to Ōtaki during the school holidays to try out the new community basketball court in Haruatai Park.

“Basketball is a growing sport and, jumping on the back of the popularity of players like Steve Adams, a lot of kids are becoming more and more interested in playing,” he says.

“It’s not always easy getting into indoor courts so it’s great people are getting behind an outdoor court like this.

“It’s cool because it’s a good meeting point and helps keep the kids busy, out of trouble, active and playing sport. It’s just a good thing to do.”

Council and the Ōtaki Community Board considered community feedback and worked with young people in town to decide on the site for the new keyhole, or half-sized, basketball court.

Haruatai Park was picked as the preferred option for its central, easily-accessible location that’s close to key shopping areas, schools, kura kaupapa and colleges.

Te Kura-ā-Iwi O Whakatupuranga Rua Mano student Amosa Suitauloa, 13, was down at the court last week practising his shots.

“It means a lot to have this, I live just up the road and can practise my layouts whenever I like.”

Council’s Parks and Recreation Manager Alison Law says the court is the first stage of work to make the park even more of a great recreational space for different age groups.

Work still to come will include an upgrade of the park’s playground and a redevelopment of Ōtaki Pool.

“It’s already a destination park that pulls people to Ōtaki and breathing some life back into facilities there, starting with the basketball court, will enable Haruatai to become even more of a social hub for young people and the community as a whole,” Ms Law says.



Wellington Saints guard Jordan Mills keeps an eye on the free-throw competition at the opening of the new half-sized basketball court at Haruatai Park in Ōtaki.

# Hundreds enjoy Matariki celebration

More than a thousand people turned up for this year’s final Matariki celebration on Saturday at the Ngā Purapura centre in Ōtaki.



Members of Ngā Kākano had a great time running the event.

Local bands entertained along with workshops for adults and children, a jam room where kids could talk to local musicians and have a go on a range of instruments, kite and jewellery making, cupcake decorating and Māori games.

“Ōtaki has a hidden jewel with Nga Purapura, we had never heard of it before,” says Lloyd Bosrich from Waikanae. “What an awesome free winter event for families. My son loved the jam room with some incredible musicians in there.”

Paraparaumu resident Sarah Wilson said she didn’t know what to expect but wanted to see what Matariki was all about.

“We had a great time. There were lots of creative things to do and some amazing musicians to watch. Our kids

loved making Matariki cupcakes and playing some Māori games.”

Te Rehia Lake-Perez from Te Puāwaitanga o Ngā Kākano, who organised the event in partnership with the Council, says they had lots of fun running the event and were really thrilled with how the day went.

“There was a great vibe with all sorts of people coming along from across the district. It was great looking around and seeing people chatting while doing Matariki-inspired activities or just hanging out and listening to the music.”

Te Puāwaitanga o Ngā Kākano’s goal is to foster whānaungatanga and positive community spirit.

The event closed six weeks of Matariki events held in different parts of the district.



Children learn how to play a Māori game.