

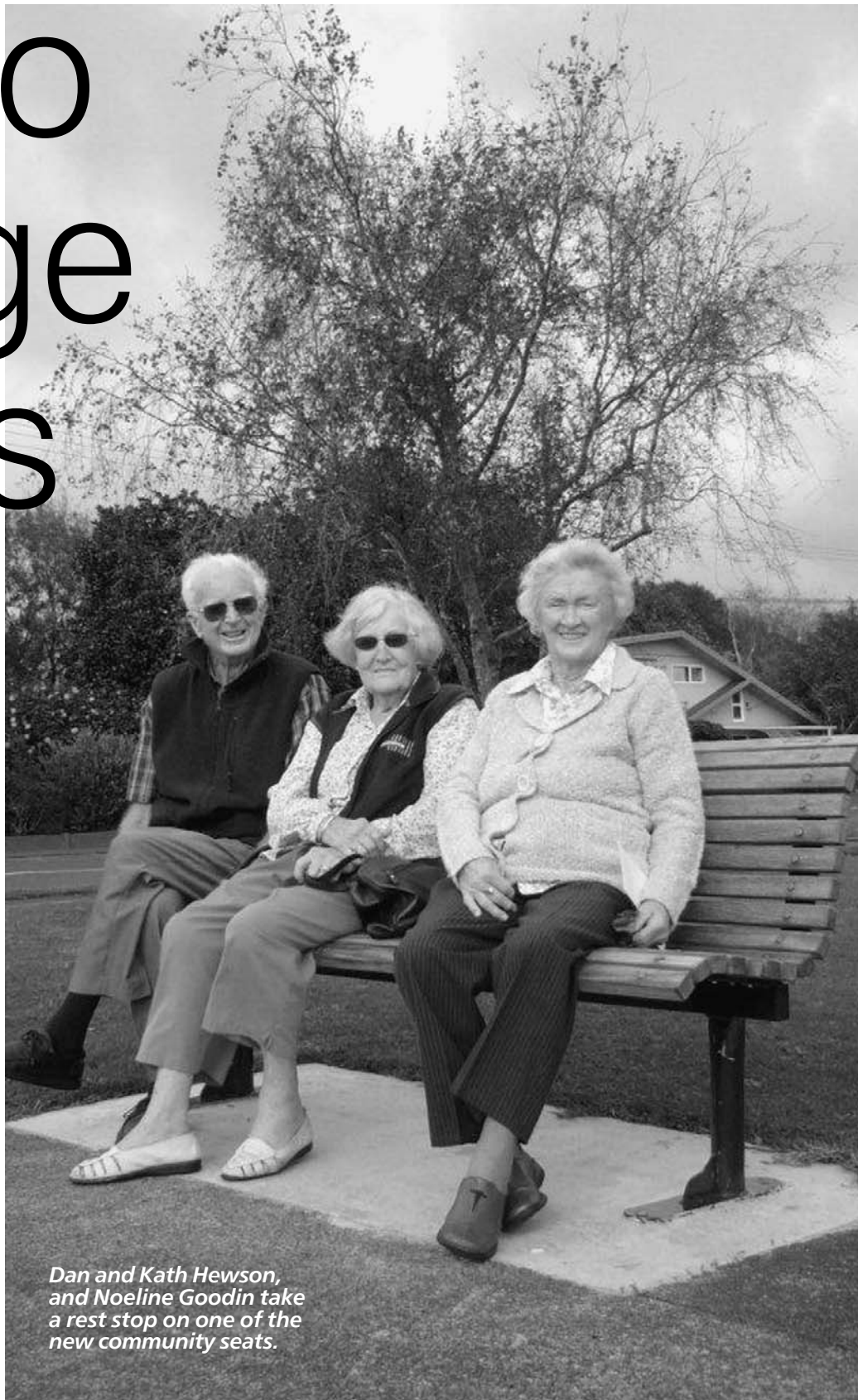
Okato Village Seats

Eighty-three year old Noeline Goodin is passionate about her village and, because she loves it so much, she wants to ensure there are facilities in Okato that will help enable her and her elderly friends, some of them with significant health challenges, to stay as long as possible. One of the facilities they need is strategically placed seats to enable them to go for walks, which will help maintain their fitness and enable them to walk the distance to the various facilities in the village.

The question of seating on the streets of Okato is not a new one. Noeline had noticed van loads of residents from rest homes standing around by the swing bridge at the end of Old South Road and had imagined how good it would be if they could sit there and relax awhile. Not long afterwards, Claire Stewart, who was mayor of New Plymouth District Council at the time, was giving a talk to Okato residents. During question time, Noeline addressed the issue and within two weeks picnic tables with seats had been installed. "They are so well used it warms my heart," she says.

More recently she noticed that her friends, including Kath (92 years) and Dan Hewson (95 years), needed to stop for rests if they were to walk from their

(Continued on page 2)



Dan and Kath Hewson, and Noeline Goodin take a rest stop on one of the new community seats.

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OKATO

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cover story

home in Hickford Place to the Four Square or other facilities in Okato township. The friends talked and as a result, Kath rang Jim Lawn, chairperson of Okato Community Trust, who advocates for the elderly and disabled in our community. They had money available that could possibly have been used for the project, but it seemed appropriate that New Plymouth District Council provide the funds so Noeline, along with 15 other elderly residents, approached them. They were turned down. This upset Noeline and her friends who felt that, as a village community, they had been forgotten. "Most of us are ex-dairy farmers who have paid our dues, been on committees, and are of a great age when you add us all together," says Noeline.

A sympathetic Jim Lawn rang the Taranaki Daily News, and Iris Putt rallied elderly friends. They all met at Hempton Hall one cold and windy day and, reported Noeline, they sat on the hall's concrete steps to talk because there was nowhere else to sit. A subsequent approach to the District Council was successful and two Australian hardwood seats were installed in the village—one on Cumming Street outside the Vet Clinic and the other on Carthew Street outside Hempton Hall. It is believed they were funded by a special mayoral fund.

Noeline notes that the seats are being used frequently by young and old and is grateful to all those who helped make them a reality — those who met and marched for the cause, local photographer Trevor Read, the Daily News, Merv Hooker and the Lions, Jim Lawn and the Community Trust, and especially Peter Tennent and the District Council. "Everyone agrees that Mayor Peter and the District Council have done a great job and we'd really like to thank them for it," says Noeline.

Story and picture by Kerry Lilley

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Okato Lions Club



New Plymouth ANZAC parade where local Abby Bridgeman spoke to the gathered crowd - centre in behind the leader - photo by Jennifer Gros

Hello readers,

Our autumn weather is changing day by day. We are having cooler nights and a few odd showers. The cows are winding down slowly.

As usual Lions have been busy over the last few months. Our vintage hay days and trail bike and horse trek rides are behind us now. They were all a great success with thanks to everyone involved. On Saturday, 17 April six of us Lion members removed two old trees from Doreen Butler's section at Oakura — thanks guys.

Lions helped out on Anzac day with getting the Hempton Hall prepared for the Anzac Service.

Planning is in its final stages for our 40th Anniversary on 8 May.

My year as President is coming to a close, with changeover night being the second Wednesday in July. Our new President, Lindsay McFetridge, and his team will take over from that date. We have been fortunate with two new members joining us last month and another new member joining us in June.

Take care

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Nora Fox: Tiny Tots' Teacher

Nora Fox is an institution around Okato. Having taught a huge number of the community's children, she has earned a place in the district's history books and a place in our hearts. It is my privilege to record her story for our TOM readers.

Nora Margaret Fleming was born in Stratford into an Irish Catholic family in 1933. She was the fifth child of a family of seven, and was delivered by the well-known Dr Doris Gordon. Nora's younger sister, Nellie, who was seven years her junior, died of meningitis when she was eleven months old but Nora, her three brothers and two remaining sisters spent an otherwise carefree life growing up on the family farm. In those days, children had to make their own fun but, according to Nora, "There was always plenty to do!" Having older brothers and sisters, activities tended to revolve around cricket and football and running, eeling in the river and climbing trees. While her father encouraged sporting pursuits, her mother encouraged education.

Nora attended Kahui Rd School for her primary education. It seems that she had leanings towards a teaching career even then for when the school's sole teacher didn't turn up on a few occasions, eleven year old Nora encouraged her classmates to stay at school and do their work.

There was no transport service to the district high schools at Okato or Opunake, so Nora became a boarder at New Plymouth's Sacred Heart College for her secondary school years. There were few opportunities for boarders and their families to make contact during term time and this was tough for Nora, whose family was a close-knit one. On the other hand, she nurtured some close friendships at school that endure to this day. Nora's favourite subjects were literature and history but sporting pursuits, principally tennis and netball, were always at the forefront of her interests. There was an old concrete court at the school, and though it was rough and cracked, she played lots of tennis and netball on it, and became a Taranaki B Grade netball rep!

Nora completed her secondary education in 1950 and went north to Ardmore Teachers' College, about 50km south of Auckland. Prior to being converted to a residential teachers' college, Ardmore had been an airforce unit and its sleeping quarters were lined with bunks. For the entire two years of their training Eileen Aylward (nee O'Sullivan) slept in a top bunk and Nora occupied the one below it. The only home comforts, Nora recalls, in fact the only ones that would fit their allocated space, were a wardrobe and a desk each. Nora and Eileen became best friends for life and Nora tells me that they've never had a cross word.

Nora used to travel to Auckland by coal train, travelling throughout the night, arriving early in the morning and attending lectures for the rest of the day. Life during the week

was dominated by lectures and sporting pursuits, including netball and indoor basketball. Nora played for Ardmore's top basketball team during both years she was there, and became vice captain for the Auckland under 21 representative team in her second year.

Students did not go out on weekdays, but during weekends they would travel on 'troupies' into Auckland for sporting events, to movies, for social occasions and to the balls that were held each term. Twice a year — in summer and again during the winter — the top teams from training colleges all round New Zealand would gather for tournaments in Auckland, Ardmore and Wellington.

Nora graduated from Ardmore in 1952 with a Teaching Diploma, and then completed her formal training by doing a probationary year at Pungarehu, where she taught primers three and four. A year teaching at Newall Rd School followed.

In 1955, she married Murray Fox, a farmer, who lived in the Newall district. She gave up teaching then, to raise their three children — Peter, Barbara and Mark. Nora immersed herself in her roles of wife and mother, coached netball and encouraged her children in their own sporting pursuits. The family moved to Okato in 1964 and Nora has lived here ever since.

It wasn't long before the incumbent headmaster, Mr McNichol, was knocking on Nora's door. There were classes in the primary department that had no teacher. Would Nora consider helping out? She started doing afternoons and relief teaching, and took up her first permanent position in 1969, the year the school assumed a separate identity from the then district high school. She had the choice of three positions and chose an upper junior class.

Nora enjoyed teaching juniors but eventually, her specialty became new entrants. She had spent a lot of time with the infant mistress and when a vacancy for a new entrant teacher arose, no one wanted to take on the challenge. After some persuasion, Nora agreed to try it for six months. She needed no further encouragement; she was hooked! "(The children) were so lovable and spontaneous, and it was a privilege to nurture them in their early school years," she says.

Nora may have felt privileged to teach them, but the children were even luckier, for Nora was not only an excellent teacher, she also held a very special gift for genuine caring and a talent for demonstrating that to her small charges. One day, Nora asked one of her little boys, late for school and looking sad, "What's the matter?" The boy responded that his mummy and daddy didn't love each other anymore. Nora answered, "Never mind, Mrs Fox still loves you." The child's face lit up and he went off happily to do his day's work. On another occasion, a little girl didn't want to come to school and her mother was despairing. Nora reassured her that her daughter would be fine and set about spending lots of time and energy encouraging her. "A week or two later," says Nora proudly, "you couldn't have kept her away."



Nora relaxing in her garden.

One of the most memorable events in Nora's teaching career was the fire that damaged several classrooms, the medical room and a cloakroom in the main primary school block in October 1977. It started from a welding spark during the time a new heating system was being installed. "I happened to be playing tennis that evening with Trevor Knuckey, Bruce Sim and Tito Waller," Nora recalls. One of them called out, "Nora, the school's on fire!" She ran out onto the road and from there she could see the smoke billowing up. All she could think about was the children's records, which were kept in the office. Thankfully, the fire hadn't reached them and she was able to remove them to a safe place, but it was heartbreaking seeing the children's work go up in smoke.

In 1991, Murray, who had been unwell for some time, died suddenly. Nora took two weeks off work, and then another. "But life goes on," she said philosophically, and then she went back to work.

Nora retired in 1996. She had taught for 27 years at Okato Primary School, serving under Stewart Montgomery, Jack Mills, John Robertson, Graeme Harrison, and Stuart Smythe. She had taught two generations and spent one-third of her life teaching. In the year of her retirement, there were nine of her great-nieces and great-nephews attending the school, and she had taught them all. "I was ready for retirement," Nora tells me. "I wanted to pursue my sporting interests of tennis and golf, to garden and to do my own thing. I had elderly parents to pay attention to and the history group, and I became more involved with St Patricks Church, where I am on the Parish Council."

Norah has been retired for 14 years now, "and there's been a lot of water under the bridge," she says, "but I still love meeting the children I taught, and catching up on their children." She keeps in contact with many of her colleagues too and still meets some of them on a regular basis. She tends her garden, plays golf and the odd game of tennis. But more than anything, she loves to spend time with friends and family, and to keep in contact with her grandchildren by e-mail. With longevity in her family (her mother lived to be 100) Nora sees plenty of future yet.

And so Nora, we wish you many healthy, happy and fulfilling years ahead. And we salute you!

Words and picture by Kerry Lilley



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Kaka In Okato?

Has anyone else been visited by a kaka recently in Okato? For some days we have been hearing banging noises as things drop on the tin roof of our kiln-shelter. At first we thought it might be blackbirds dropping snails.

But on Easter Sunday we saw that the culprit was in fact a kaka, which was systematically moving around in a large kauri tree adjacent to the roof, apparently breaking open the kauri cones and dropping the debris. We got a very clear view of him. It seems he (I'm assuming it was a young itinerant male on his OE) had been there for several days.

I have heard of kakas in the area before but this was our first sighting. We presume they come all the way from Kapiti or Mount Bruce, as these are the nearest kaka colonies that we are aware of.

Mike and Lynn Spencer

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Okato Pony Club

Darelle Martin and her horse, Asterix, won both the Senior Dressage and the Overall Cup at the Closed ODE at Okato recently. Darelle and Asterix, along with Caroline Beekman, Powerful Presence and Charlotte Grayling, NRM Ru Star have achieved team selection into New Zealand's top Pony Club Event! The NZPC Champs! This is a proud moment for Okato Pony Club because our riders make up half of the Taranaki Team! Our reserve for the 16 years and under team is also from Okato Pony Club, Kim Kalin with Fhyne Thyme.

Darelle and Asterix.



Results

Junior

- 1 Georgia Strachan
- 2 Madison Smyth
- 3 Kayla Dean
- 4 Julia Brophy

Intermediate

- 1 Jessie Gibson
- 2 Phillipa Grayling
- 3 Ella Beaumont
- 4 Anna Lacey

Senior

- 1 Darelle Martin
- 2 Kim Kalin
- 3 Kim Downes
- 4 Ashley Downes



Abby Bridgeman takes a shot at goal during the Oceania Inline Hockey Championships.

Photo by Binh Trinh of Picture Perfect Photography.

Inline Hockey Success

Okato was well represented in the Oceania Inline Hockey Championships held at New Plymouth's East End Skating Rink, 10-14 April. The tournament is an age group event that pits New Zealand players against their Australian counterparts.

Okato representatives in NZ teams were Khord Kopu in the Men's Under-21, Kayden Gibson in the Boys' Under-16, and Abby Bridgeman in the Senior Women's teams. Amazingly, all won gold.

Khord's Mum, Jacky, was able to attend some of the competition and was impressed with the standard. "It was great watching the high quality play," she said.

New Zealand won the competition and the Trans-Tasman Trophy.

Story by Kerry Lilley



Kayden Gibson receiving his gold medal.



Abby receiving her medal from Deputy Mayor Matheson.

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Sculpturist And Tiler In Okato

Recently whilst on a social outing I met up with a couple, Hayden Thompson and Amy Raxworthy, who have not long moved from the Wanganui region to Mangatete Road, Okato and are living in one of the houses owned by Raewyn and Bernie Lawn.

As we got talking I discovered that Hayden and Amy are self-employed with a business in tiling and creating sculptures.

"Firstly, what brought you to Taranaki?" I ask.

"We've had many holidays in the 'Naki and always enjoyed visiting the region. Plus the lifestyle is fantastic here. So we put an advertisement in the paper seeking a rental property, a call was made from the Lawns and here we are 10 months later. We love it here."

Hayden's business as a tiler first started as a partnership in Wanganui and this work involved many commercial sites including the Splash Centre in Wanganui, which he tells me was a huge job taking over six months to complete. "I do prefer the domestic tiling as it becomes more of a private consultation. I feel confident in knowing the products and space I work in. Especially since moving districts it has been a nice way to get to know people too."

With Hayden's trade as a tiler, he finds many of his clients want to utilise all of the remaining tiles and create mosaics, tiled mirrors, letterboxes and the like, and from here Hayden was inspired to produce unique, durable and quick-to-make pieces of art.

Polystyrene is the base for the sculptures, and with a product of this type it is very easy to carve and shape to clients' wishes. From this comes the uniqueness and individuality of each piece — no moulds are used. "I wanted my designs to be original and this is maintained by hand sculpting." Once the design is complete, the fibreglass is applied, which provides waterproofing and allows for the sculpture to be kept outside if desired as the product is very hardwearing and durable. Then a product called Fosroc is plastered on top — this gives the effect of looking like stone.

With a background degree in BCGD (Computer Graphics), Hayden understands ideas, styles and colour, which are portrayed to his clients around choices of sculptures and design styles.

Hayden has made many different sculptures, anything from letterbox numbers, wall hangings and garden sculptures, including 3D sculptures.

Clients can choose what they like, catering to each individual's needs or wants.

Hayden has pieces in Real Tart Gallery, New Plymouth and he was also involved in the Coastal Garden Safari earlier this year.

If you would like to see or get in touch with Hayden or Amy you can do so by contacting them at the numbers on the advertisement.

By Milly Carr



Hayden with some of his creations.



Surf Highway 45 shield and flower.



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Mowers make the man (any man!) happy

It's a happy day for me (not when I have to mow the lawns though), when I go into a local business and the team are professional and passionate about what they do. This was the case recently when I went into Campbell Mowers in Beach St. We are not talking machinery supermarkets here, we are talking about a small business that prides itself on knowledge, quality, customer care and old fashioned service.

Justin Weedon, the owner of Campbell Mowers for the last eight months, is proud of his line up of lawn mowers and lawn care products, for sale brand new or second hand. He sells brands of lawn mowers that have proven themselves to Justin through reliability, dependability and quality. For instance the Victa brand is what Justin and his right hand man John would call 'one of the best'. It is made in Australia and boasts a large cutting circle of 19 inches, has ball bearing wheels (versus cheap brands made in China with plastic wheels), has parts readily available and can be easily serviced. Justin sleeps easy at night knowing he has sold a good quality machine, fully set up, and ready to go with back up service available. It is certainly nice to know as a consumer that there are passionate people in the community who care about what they are selling and have the knowledge of products, parts and servicing to back up any sales pitch.

So let's get it straight, Justin and John are not sales people to quote their own words. They class themselves as mechanics and as such, between them both, have a combined mechanical expertise of more than 55 years. Justin has been 'into' small mechanics since he left school more than 20 years ago. He began his training at polytechnic and worked at various different mower and mechanical businesses around the area and beyond, gaining further experience. He also has a keen interest in motorbikes. John is an ex-RAF mechanic with 35 years experience tinkering with motors and has worked at Campbell Mowers for many years.

But to give them both their dues, they know what they are talking about and if you want to buy a lawn mower or any lawn care products or have a lawn mower that needs some tender loving care, then these guys are experts. They know lawn mowers inside out and back to front. Campbell Mowers will also sharpen your tools – chainsaws, loppers, secateurs etc. They do wheel grinding on Reel mowers plus service and sell these. All machines of any brand and age are given a warranty and new machines get an additional free service. Customer parking is located at the back of the premises for ease of unloading and loading machinery. Opening hours are Monday to Friday 7.30am to 5.30pm and Saturday 9am to 12pm.

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Okato Playcentre

"Whaanau Tupu Ngaatahi — Families Growing Together"

Last month we celebrated Playcentre Awareness Week (PAW), which is a time for us to celebrate being involved in Playcentre. PAW is also an opportunity for us to share with our community who we are, what we do, and how we do it.

There is an assortment of early childhood education available, and we want to help local families make an informed choice. Our main point of difference with other education providers is that our parents are running the show! Playcentre acknowledges and supports parents as the first and most important educators of their children.

Five Facts About Playcentre

- 1 Our sessions are for children from 0–6 years.
- 2 We recognise that children learn through fun and play — we have a minimum of 16 areas of play at each session.
- 3 We are a licensed early childhood education provider — we follow the curriculum and receive funding through the Ministry of Education.
- 4 Our parents co-operatively manage our centre and supervise our sessions.
- 5 Our parents are provided with free NZQA education and training options to help us understand child development and learning, and learn session supervision skills.

To celebrate PAW, we held two main events: a Trike-athon and Family Fun Day.

About 25 Playcentre children participated in a sponsored 10 minutes of laps at Coastal Taranaki School riding decorated bikes, trikes, ride-ons, scooters, or being pushed in buggies, or pushing dolls in prams. It was a thrilling experience for our kids. Constable Richard Corry started the event with his police car lights and siren. A crowd of proud mums, dads and grandparents cheered them on, and kept them pointed in the right direction! A prizegiving with certificates followed the ride, with prizes donated by local businesses. The day also had fun activities for all with a Big Dig, Lolly Scramble, Bouncy Castle, and a Gumbboot Throw.

We are very grateful to these people/businesses for supporting Okato Playcentre:

- 1 Constable Corry, for coming along to chat to our children about bike safety and to start the trike-athon off;
- 2 Coastal Taranaki School for the use of their facilities;
- 3 Mitre 10 for providing the bouncy castle
- 4 Pungarehu Taranaki Farmers for the Red Band gumboots prize;
- 5 Mitchell Cycles (bike helmet), Fronrunner, Cycle Inn, LIC, Toyworld, BP Oakura, Collins Sports Centre and Dreamtime Surf Shop for their donations of spot prizes.

40th Anniversary Open Day

Okato Playcentre has been operating for 40 years, so we combined an open day with our 40th anniversary celebrations. Our patron, Mary Grylls (the benefactor of our premises), was given the honour of cutting the cake, amidst a small mob of helpers trying to dip their fingers in the fancy icing. A few old girls came along to reminisce with us. Photos from through the years were on display and caused a few giggles.

Every day is an open day at Okato Playcentre, so please come in and check us out during any session, Tuesdays and Thursdays 9.30am to 12.30pm. Minimal fees. Fun for the whole family! Phone Kerry 06-752 8095 for more info.



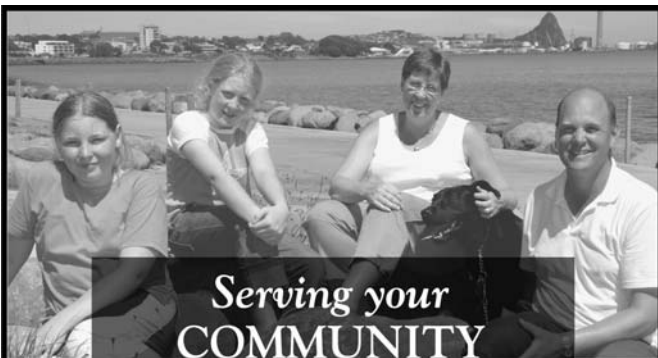
Jason Komene hurls the winning gumbboot throw for the Dads.



President, Rachel Douglas, and Patron, Mary Grylls, hold the 40th Anniversary cake.



Constable Corry starts the trike-athon.



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OKATO CLUBS & GROUPS

Playcentre

Main Road, Okato (over the Stony Bridge). Tuesday and Thursday, 9.30 - 12.30pm. Contact Rachel 752 4463.

Playgroup

St Luke's Hall, Main Road Okato. Wednesday morning, 10am - 12 noon. Contact Vanessa 752 4431 or Danelle 752 4916.

Plunket

Meet bi-monthly at Jaclyn Fisher's home. Contact Jaclyn 752 4872.

Okato Fire Brigade

Weekly. Monday night trainings, 7pm - 9pm. Contact Barry Harvey 752 4568.

Historical Society

Meets quarterly in the Community Trust Hall. Contact Iris Putt 752 4182.

St Patrick's Church, Okato

Daily mass 8.30am. Saturday evening mass 7pm. Inquiries to Steak Goodin 752 8160 or Nora Fox 752 4062.

St Paul's Church

10am services. Congregate first and third Sunday of the month. Contact Jan Putt 752 4188.

New Zeal Church

Service 10.30am, Sundays at St Luke's Hall. Contact Angela and Kevin McFetridge 752 4993.

Okato Co-operating Parish Women's Fellowship

Meet bi-monthly, first Wednesday of the month in St Luke's lounge, 1pm. Contact Lorraine Whittle 752 4359.

Care and Craft

Get together Thursday fortnight at St Luke's lounge. 10.30am - 2.30pm. Contact Thea Fisher 752 4290.

Highway 45 Craft

Meet weekly on Monday mornings 10am - 12noon at members' houses. Contact Iris Putt 752 4182.

Tumahu Rural Women

Meet every second Wednesday of the month, 1pm at alternate members' houses. Contact Joyce Downes 753 4122.

Tumahu Golf Club

Roly Harvey 752 4314. Sunday: Mens golf day, Tuesday: womens golf day. Every 2nd Wednesday of the month: mixed golf.

JKA Karate, Okato

Monday and Wednesday 6pm - 7.30pm in Coastal Taranaki School Gymnasium. Contact Nicci 752 4529 or 027 259 6223.

Squash Club

Monday evening club night. Contact Steve Kelly 027 2333 229.

Tennis Club

Contact Maree Moffitt 752 8107 or Raewyn Lawn 752 4466.

Okato Bowling Club

Club day held every Sunday at 9.30am onwards. President Bruce Peacock 752 4538, Secretary Fiona Liddall 752 4509, Convenor Cheryl Neilson 752 4218.

Okato Lions

Contact Merv Hooker, ph 752 4086.

Okato Pool

Learn to Swim - Tuesday and Thursday nights from 5.15 - 6pm. Swim Club: Swimming Training - 6 till 7 - 7.30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. For more inquiries contact Fiona Lacey 752 4535.

St Peter's Guild

Meet fourth Friday of each month. Contact Angela Montgomery 752 7738.

Probus

Meet every third Friday at the Oakura Golf Club. Contact Margaret Hodges 752 1371.

Coastal Garden Circle

Meet every third Monday of the month. Contact Rae Hooker 752 4086.

Pony Club

Contact Carey Brophy, 752 4458.

Please contact Milly 752 4425 for any additional listings or amendments.