



PRESS RELEASE

Local Community Benefits From Mt Ruapehu Fundraiser

MT RUAPEHU, 18 DECEMBER 2019: Hundreds of Ruapehu and Taupo locals headed to Mt Ruapehu at the weekend to ride the Sky Waka, all for a great cause.

Mt Ruapehu's annual Locals' Weekend not only offered locals a chance to experience the new Sky Waka in summer at a great price, but also raised \$6,420 for St John Waimarino Area Committee and the National Park Community Pool, with a further \$757 raised in donation buckets.

Nearly 1,300 people rode the Sky Waka heading up to Knoll Ridge at 2020m above sea level for spectacular panoramic views and dining, and even some lingering snow to play in.

RAL General Manager Sales and Marketing Michelle Caldwell says, "Feedback across the weekend was really positive, with loads of locals having either never been high on the mountain as they don't ski, or those who do ski had never been before in summer, noting the vast differences in the scenery and terrain as the snow melts."

Michelle adds that due to the success of the weekend Mt Ruapehu is now offering a new summer Local Price. For people who live in the Taupō and Ruapehu Districts there is now a special Sky Waka price of \$20pp when they bring a full paying visitor to the mountain.

"We want our locals to enjoy the maunga on a regular basis and be proud to bring their visitors to one of New Zealand's newest attractions throughout the summer."

Emma Benefield, St John Waimarino Area, says that fundraising is vital to keep improving the area's St John services and equipment and this opportunity is fantastic.

"In the past the Area Committee has supplied the local station with defibrillators, essential equipment, ambulances and one of our newest ventures and quite exciting is the Health Shuttle. This is a free service for anyone to use so they can get a ride to and from hospital when they have an appointment.

"The shuttle can be booked and it's for the elderly or anyone at all, including families who need to take their babies to and from hospital and are not comfortable to drive themselves, everything. And it's absolutely free. The health shuttle was supplied by the Area Committee, we fundraised extensively for it.

“Bringing the locals up the mountain is great and being able to not only fundraise for St John but explain the story that you can get a ride on the health shuttle for free has been valuable for us. It’s especially important now that it’s a 2.5hr trip to Whanganui because the Parapara Road is closed.”

Emma adds that the opportunity to be up the mountain for fundraising is hard to put into words. “It’s a really good experience and we’re thankful that we have the opportunity to be up here.”

The money raised for the National Park community pool will help buy a new thermal pool cover. The pool, which is at National Park school, is open during the summer for community use.

Fundraiser Rachel Mariu says, “It’s such a great opportunity and we really appreciate everything that Mt Ruapehu does for the local areas and community groups. Mt Ruapehu really supports our National Park school a lot, and even though this is a community pool the school looks after it and we’re all really appreciative for the help that we receive.

“We’re really grateful, it’s hard to keep pools open. National Park is so isolated and rurally it’s 40km’s from any major town. Having a facility like that for the community to use for well-being and a sense of coming together is really important.”

Michelle adds that with the new Sky Waka open all year round the mountain is now truly a year-round attraction. “As well as offering a great summer experience the Sky Waka is valuable to the region’s economy resulting in employment for locals and a boost to local restaurants, bars and accommodation with the influx of summer visitors to what has traditionally been a winter activity.”

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