

OUTDOOR EDUCATION GETS A BOOST AT KAITOKE CAMP

\$50,000

Towards a new high ropes course to be built at the YMCA Kaitoke Outdoor Education Centre.

A new high ropes course at Kaitoke Outdoor Education Centre in Upper Hutt has been given the green light as part of the YMCA's Let Kids Be Kids initiative. The team at Y Central has committed \$50,000 to accelerating the development of the high ropes course, which will create a series of above-ground activities from tree to tree, including flying foxes, rope nets, horizontal ladders and more.

The high ropes course will seriously raise the stakes at Kaitoke, taking the Centre from a destination for primary and intermediate schools to a place where senior students and adults can also stretch beyond their comfort zone.

"High ropes courses are a great safe way for secondary students to have fun, be active and gain confidence," says Ben Keat, COO. "None of Wellington's high schools has one of these courses, so Kaitoke can be a go-to destination for outdoor education, with new senior programmes including the adventure elements for Duke of Edinburgh award participants."

Outdoor education for senior students is a way to complement their curriculum learning, boost their physical dexterity and give them outdoor skills for life. Working alongside other students also provides practice for teamwork, with experienced students supporting the more nervous individuals.

After Covid-19 cancellations, the Y Central team was concerned that the high ropes course wouldn't be able to go ahead. But the time spent in lockdown wasn't wasted, with the team working together to come up with strategies for breaking down some of the barriers that face Kiwi kids when it comes to being healthy and happy. The high ropes course is a way to get local students excited about outdoor education – and creates a new pathway for youth to pursue a career in outdoor education.

"This project will add to the development of our outdoor instructor volunteer programme, with students now able to further develop their roping and adventure-based learning skills," says Ben. "On-the-job training and working towards qualifications helps young people who are passionate about the outdoors have a pathway into a career."

And it's not only the team at Y Central who have been thinking about ways for New Zealand students to be more active. The wider YMCA network has launched Let Kids Be Kids, which aims to use sport, education, family time and camps to help young Kiwis recover from the stresses of the coronavirus lockdowns; programmes across New Zealand are being launched to support that goal.

The nationwide YMCA network is the largest not-for-profit provider of sport and recreation services in New Zealand. Together we provide services throughout the country, including indoor and outdoor sport and recreation options, health and fitness programmes and water-based activities. With over 2.7 million participations nationally in YMCA active recreation programming (as of April 2020) it is estimated that 1 in 6 New Zealanders is involved in some way with the YMCA.

If you'd like to learn more about Let Kids Be Kids, and find out how to support the cause, visit our donation page: ycentral.nz/donate.


**LET KIDS BE
KIDS AGAIN!**

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