

A basketball league for the whole Whanau at the Y in Masterton

It's not often you see a basketball game where the youngest participant is seven and the oldest in their 50s – but a new initiative at the Y in Masterton is setting out to make it a regular event.

The new Whanau Basketball League is the brainchild of recreation assistant Te Kapua Haira. It's a social five-a-side league where at least one child and one woman must be on the court at all times and teams are made up of family members and friends. To come up with the idea, Te Kapua was inspired by his own family, who he describes as, "sports maniacs who'll play anything and everything together – and it's the most fun when the kids are involved."

The fresh format, introduced in late 2019, brought together six whanau teams in a low-pressure fun round robin competition. With competitive leagues on offer from primary through to college level, Whanau Basketball League is a low-stress alternative to bring families and friends together.

The games were a huge success: "Everybody jumped on the court and gave it a go," says Te Kapua. "There was a great family whanau vibe. The kids were quite shy at first, but because of the relaxed family feel, they soon started to get more involved."

Over the last year or so, The Y Masterton has been working towards creating a Family Recreational Facility which can go beyond just physical health to provide a '3rd place', in which whanau and the community at-large can connect, contributing to a more positive social wellbeing.

Y General Manager Ben Keat says "programmes like Whanau basketball only enhance this vision, We've come a long way in the last 12 months, growing our programmes and services with support from the community. We plan to build on the success of programmes like Whanau Basketball in 2020"

The feedback from the inaugural league has been outstanding, with positive comments from players at all ages and stages. Now the team at the Y Masterton is recruiting teams for an even bigger season in 2020, and Te Kapua hopes it will continue to gain popularity:

"My goal is to see the League grow, expand and evolve. I want families to get the best experience here and I would love to see other branches of the Y have a go. I know they would love it!"

Registrations for the 2020 Whanau leagues are now open as well as opportunities for various other kids and family initiatives.

Click here for all info or email nicole@ymcawellington.org.nz to register your team. The Y would also love to hear from any people or organisations keen to help support the upgrade of the basketball hoops.