

## Opotiki kicks the butt

Opotiki District Council, with the support of Toi Te Ora - Public Health, has resolved to adopt an educational Smokefree Outdoor Spaces policy.

Starting 1 March 2008, the public will be asked to refrain from smoking in council owned playgrounds, parks, sports fields, reserves, gardens and beaches. This also includes events held in council parks which will consistently be promoted as *smoke free events*. Bespoke signage, designed by local artist Jamie Boynton, will be displayed in outdoor locations as a reminder to remain smokefree.

The policy aims to normalise non-smoking and encourage positive role models for both children and young people in Opotiki District. Evidence shows that children and young adults learn from observing others and tend to follow the behaviour of role models. The community-enforced policy gives Opotiki residents the opportunity to provide an encouraging environment for families and makes it a cleaner and healthier place to live.

Many other local councils across New Zealand have adopted Smokefree Outdoor Spaces policies in an effort to promote positive messages and achieve community outcomes. Opotiki is the fourth council in New Zealand to adopt a comprehensive educational Smokefree Outdoor Spaces policy.

Mike Houghton, Parks and Reserves Manager, Opotiki District Council claims, "A key component of this is Council's partnership with Toi Te Ora - Public Health; we are together developing initiatives to deliver the 'good news'". Mike and Jenna Clarke, Health Promoter, Toi Te Ora - Public Health, worked on developing the policy for Opotiki and gained the support of council members. "I congratulate Opotiki District Council for their proactive and demonstrated leadership in promoting a smokefree lifestyle as being both desirable and the norm in Opotiki. The Council is sending a positive message that our young peoples' health and the environment should be protected from the effects of smoking" said Mrs Clarke.

Nationally smokefree council projects have not been evaluated with pre and post data, so Toi Te Ora – Public Health will be providing the first comprehensive evaluation of its kind in New Zealand. Baseline data collection for the year-long evaluation study began in Opotiki on 12 January 2008 and will be completed in February 2009. Four Toi Te Ora – Public Health employees surveyed Opotiki residents, counted over 1000 cigarette butt remnants in five parks (Memorial Park, Rose Garden, Princess St. Reserve, John Burdett Park, Skate Park), and observed the public. "The purpose of the evaluation is to gauge community awareness of the policy, measure compliance, and determine whether or not people of Opotiki listen to and support messages of smokefree children's environments," explains Jenna Clarke. Feedback from the Upper Hutt City Council evaluation completed in October 2007 revealed strong public support for the Smokefree Outdoor Spaces policy. The evaluation team in Opotiki found that a number of Opotiki residents support the policy as it aims to reduce the amount of smoking in front of children.

# Public Health

Toi Te Ora



Photo 1: Toi Te Ora – Public Health staff, from left to right: Russell Ingram-Seal (Researcher/Evaluator), Maria Wood (Programme Leader Social Environments), Brad Clarke (Public Health Development Advisor), Jenna Clarke (Health Promoter)



Photo 2: Over 150 butts picked up in Memorial Park

ENDS

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**Toi Te Ora Public Health provides health protection and promotion programmes aimed at supporting groups and communities to improve and sustain health.  
We serve the greater Bay of Plenty and Lakes Districts.**