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Makara pupils right on track

By Julia Czerwonatis

After almost five years in the making, teachers and pupils of Makara Model School were incredibly excited to finally open their cycling track on a bright sunny day, last Friday.

Minutes after Daisy Brown, Makara's youngest pupil, and Charlotte Dickson, Makara's oldest pupil cut the ribbon, all children jumped on their new bikes and scooters to charge along the tar-sealed track.

"The excitement level is at yay-high for us," principal Gail Dewar says.

Continued on page 2.

Albie Rigg-Malone, 5, and Olivia Holdsworth, 7, getting ready to try out their new cycling track.

PHOTO: Julia Czerwonatis

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YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER

Makara Model School celebrates opening of new cycling track



Daisy Brown, Makara's youngest pupil, and Charlotte Dickson, Makara's oldest pupil, cutting the ribbon to open the cycling track.
PHOTO: Julia Czerwonatis

Continued from page 1.

With the idea to bring cycling facilities to her community, Gail applied for funding for several years until the school was finally granted the money and support from the Wellington City Council, Bikes in Schools, and Meridian's Power Up Fund to install the track.

Gail says since Makara roads are narrow and winding, it's dangerous for people to ride their bikes and no place for children to be.

While the pupils learn all about health and safety on the road, including identifying road signs, they will receive learners, restricted and full cycling licences – a concept that the children have developed.

"The students had a lot of input into the project which was important to us," Gail explains.

"The track will also be an asset for the wider community," she says. "After schools hours, I want everyone to have access to it."

City councillor Sarah Free, portfolio lead for cycling, who spoke at the opening celebra-

tions on Friday, says this was the seventh cycling track project for Wellington schools, and there were three more in the pipeline.

"This gives kids the opportunity to learn in a safe environment to later become confident riders in the city," Sarah says.

"All the cycling track projects that we, as the council, supported are scattered all over the city. The hope is that soon all children will have access to facilities like this one – even if their own school doesn't have a track, their nearby school might do."

Pupil Evelyn Carduo bravely gave a speech in front of her fellow pupils, the teachers and guests too, saying it was a very special day for her and the entire school.

"We have been waiting for this so long having watched all the diggers driving past our classrooms windows."

"We have an exciting future ahead of us."

Evelyn also invited the community to join their upcoming triathlon on March 2.

Wellington Pride Festival kicks off this weekend

Out in the Park, Wellington's famous annual queer fair is back this Saturday in Waitangi Park.

Out in the Park is renowned for its free entertainment, with talented local singers, drag queens and kings, comedians, and circus performers taking the stage.

The event kicks off the two-week long Wellington Pride Festival (Tuu Whakahihi e Te Whanganui-a-Tara), featuring a wide range of events organised by members of our diverse

community here in the capital.

The festival will take place in various venues around Wellington throughout the week, with most festival events free and accessible to all.

"We on the committee for Out Wellington Inc have been truly honoured and privileged to have played our role in creating a diverse, inclusive and celebratory annual Wellington Pride Festival," co-chair of Out Wellington, Steven Mawhinney, says.

"This year has seen an in-

credible assortment of events which represent, promote and celebrate a variety of values we strongly believe are essential to the LGBTQIAF+ community.

"Diversity, inclusiveness, and respect have been strong themes throughout our planning and events and we can't wait to share these with you all," Steven says.

Wellington Mayor Justin Lester is opening Out in the Park at 10.45am along with Tiwhanawhana, a local Maori LGBTQIAF+ group.

Prior to this there is a short youth hikoi starting at 10am from the Civic Square City leading over the Sea Bridge to Waitangi Park.

There's something for everyone, with almost 70 stalls including community groups, local retailers, food and drink and activities for children and adults alike.

Visitors can also enter their doggie companion in the Pooches in the Park Dog Show and have the chance to win great prizes.

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