3 March 2021

**Diabetes Kids Camp 2021**

Letter by Eve De Goey (Diabetes Services Northland DHB)

Firstly, I would like to say a big THANK YOU to Health Fund PLUS for the sponsorship of the annual Diabetes Kids camp.

This year we returned to the scenic Manaia Baptist camp grounds in Taurikura where we have held this event for the past 7 years. For four full days 16 youth between the ages of 7 years to being a Year 8 student (12 – 13 years of age) attended the camp. For some they have been attending for the past 7 years and they are reunited with their diabetes camp buddies and for others this is their first camp experience with us, and also their first time of meeting another child with type 1 diabetes. We also had an 8 year old type 1 boy from Pukenui in the Far North come down to visit and stay at the camp for the day. He did not feel ready to stay over-night away from his parents and siblings.

As one of the team from the Northland DHB Diabetes service it is very humbling to be a part of the camp and witness how important these few days are to the children with type 1 diabetes when they are with “their people”. The bonding that happens between the children is truly a wonderful thing to view.

To be eligible to attend the children need to be at least 7 years old and not yet a High school student / Year 9. Priority is given to those that are newly diagnosed with type 1 diabetes and have not attended the camp in the past. A youth mentor with type 1 diabetes also attends and this year she was a Year 11 Girls High student who has been a previous camp attendee herself.

Whanau are asked for a koha of $20.00 to contribute towards the costs of the camp. This money goes toward a gift that each child receives on the Certificate of attendance ceremony night which occurs after the last evening meal we have altogether at the camp. The hire of the camp facility and the petrol vouchers for the volunteers that come to help in the kitchen is covered by Health Fund PLUS as are the vouchers given to the people who visit to facilitate activities with the children.

This year Sport Northland came and ran a session of high energy games. They returned after being a big success with the kids as part of the camp last year. We also had Mereana Pou a flax weaver come in and make flax flowers and flax fish with the children, St Johns Kids in schools, and John and Flash from MoreFM with Countdown come in and talk and interview the kids. This interview was played on air the next day on the morning show. And of course we took advantage of the beautiful surroundings at the Manaia Baptist camp grounds in Taurikura Whangarei Heads with swimming and the slippery slide. Another fun activity is the craft making that the staff run with the kids. This year the kids made pumice and shell mobiles, hats and face masks and the cards which are used to thank those that run the activities and presented to them post their activity.

The camp is well staffed with a 24 hour roster set up to ensure the children diabetes cares are managed in a safe environment. The staffing consists of Clinical Nurse specialists from the NDHB Diabetes service providing 24 care, the NDHB Child Health dietician, a Paediatric registrar and support from the Paediatricians that run the Paediatric diabetes clinics so know all the children attending these camps.

The camp not only gives the children the chance to meet and reunite with others their own age with health issues but is often the learning ground for these children to accomplish another diabetes task they have not been doing prior to attending, for example one child is now giving her own insulin injections after seeing her peers already doing this task, and children are given the opportunity to try foods that are not in their whanau home. The camp also gives their parents a well-deserved break from the continual monitoring of their child’s diabetes.

The importance of these camps is well documented in research highlighting the importance for the child’s psychological well-being.

If you would like to donate to the Diabetes Kids Camp 2022, you can gift directly to the fund so your gift can be used now and you can receive a 33 percent tax credit. Visit our donate page here: <https://northlandcommunityfoundation.org.nz/donate/> to donate by credit-card or through via bank account. Just select Health Fund PLUS – Diabetes as the preferred fund, and add in the comments Kids Camp 2021. You can also promise a gift through your Will, and it can be as much or as little as you want. See our Legal Resources page here for more information: <https://northlandcommunityfoundation.org.nz/resources/legal-resources/>

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