



10 NOV, 2022

## Taking a step in right direction

Hauraki Coromandel Post, Bay of Plenty

UNDERTOWMEDIA

Page 1 of 2

# Taking a step in right direction

Classes win shoes thanks to programme

Jim Birchall

**T**wenty-two thousand school children from across Aotearoa, including 3492 kids from 135 classrooms at 35 schools locally in the Waikato region, have joined forces with celebrity heroes Ardie Savea, Ameliaranne Ekenasio, Kane Williamson and Samantha Charlton to participate in this year's Zespri Young and Healthy Virtual Adventure.

On October 20, the health and wellbeing programme kicked into action, taking Kiwi kids on a virtual trip around the globe, instilling healthy habits along the way like moving their bodies, eating extra fruit and vegetables, drinking more water, getting a good night's sleep and reducing leisure time spent on screens.

Kim Harvey, the founder of the Young and Healthy Charitable Trust and Virtual Adventure, is delighted to kick off the adventure for the fifth year. "We've now had over 120,000 kids through the programme, and each year we see incredible results with teachers, parents and the kids themselves telling us they have more energy, can focus better in class and feel better, which is all the more important as we head to the busy end of year sprint."

The Virtual Adventure was created with the knowledge that healthy habits formed early to set a child up for a lifetime of improved physical and mental wellbeing – something Kim says has become

even more important as kids have gotten used to long stints of schooling from home over the past few years.

"Our health approach needs to put a strong focus on prevention. This year we are so fortunate to be able to get out and visit so many more of our participants and with more tamariki being in classrooms, we have started our Roving Reporters campaign, so students can tell us the many stories of how they are using the Virtual Adventure on our private Planet WellBeing TV YouTube chan-

nel.

"We will also be engaging with some of our families to follow them post-programme to see how it continues to influence their choices. So, in addition to the newly upgraded program platform and added 'travel destinations', there are some very exciting new elements of the programme this year."

Classes taking part in the Virtual Adventure work as a team to travel across the world. Along the way, they are met by their sporting heroes and ASICS ambassadors who will show them around and share some interesting facts about local history and geography, as well as some of their pro-health and wellbeing tips.

Participation in the Virtual Adventure is free thanks to the support of partners like Zespri and ASICS, with The Young and Healthy Trust ensuring teachers in participating schools have the resources they need.

"The programme has been perfected for the digital generation

with each child designing a unique avatar which they'll see interacting with their classmates and the sports stars at every stop. Better still, every real-world healthy choice – like mov-

ing their body, eating a piece of fruit or drinking water – comes with the instant reward of digital points to add to their class total. Over a five-week period, these actions start to become

ingrained so the likelihood of continuing them is much greater than from a one-off lesson," said Kim Harvey.

The good news didn't stop there for the Thames-Coromandel area's students, thanks to a very special delivery last week to Parawai School in Thames. Two very surprised classes received a pair of new ASICS sports shoes after entering the Show Us Your Moves for ASICS shoes competition last term before starting the Zespri Young and Healthy Virtual Adventure last week.

Kim said she was impressed by the

class' submissions. "They needed to show us their favourite game or activity they do as a class to take care of their mind and body. We loved the fun, teamwork and energy demonstrated in their submission."



10 NOV, 2022

Taking a step in right direction

Hauraki Coromandel Post, Bay of Plenty



Two lucky classes (above and left) won ASICS shoes.      Photos / supplied