

Course aims to grow young leaders

by Alice Te Puni

ATAWHAI, a new programme to strengthen the minds and physical capabilities of youth, was launched in Gisborne this week.

Developed from the armed forces and based on the Cactus programme, the eight-week course for 11 and 12-year-olds will start next term at Ilminster Intermediate.

It will be run by Te Runanganui o Ngati Porou and the Kaiti police, and assisted by other agencies including the army, fire service, Maori wardens and community volunteers.

National police headquarters Maori responsiveness advisor based at Tronp, Whiti Timutimu, said the objectives of the programme were to assist and support youth, instil mind and body discipline, mentor youth at risk, reduce offending and drug and alcohol abuse, and provide career education.

"It is an opportunity to build team cohesion, spirit and an awareness of their ability to achieve beyond their own expectations.

"Emphasis is put on discipline and teamwork."

Ms Timutimu said the intention was to educate and give choices to young people, instil discipline and self-esteem and encourage them to look and listen before they act.

"This programme is intended to provide our Kaiti youth with challenges to give them confidence in their ability to achieve.

"Career education is an important part of this programme and will give

GROWING LEADERS:

Firefighters show Kaiti youth how to cope during a mock car crash during the launch of Atawhai, a new programme to develop youth leadership skills.

Picture by
Paul Rickard



young people the opportunity to consider different options for their future.

"Atawhai is about assisting youth to set and realise goals and give them challenges that exceed what they think they are capable of.

"It is designed to give youth basic disciplines and guidelines outside the home environment."

Ms Timutimu said the Cactus programme had been run out of Wairoa for the past four years and had huge success in putting students back on track towards achieving at school.

The Lytton Cactus programme started last year and had also had positive impact on the whole school. Truancy had reduced and students who were previously not achieving had become leaders at their school, she said.

The eight-week course begins on October 14 and gets progressively more physically demanding.

"It ends with a graduation day that has been named 'The Longest Day' as young people are required to pass physical goals as an individual and as a team member.

The programme's launch at Ilminster Intermediate on Monday involved an emergency services display.

There will be 35 students from Ilminster and Waikirikiri selected for the course.

"Whanau are encouraged to participate in the activities or helping out in the kitchen. Just their presence alone can be huge for some of these kids," said Ms Timutimu.

The programme has been funded by Te Runanganui o Ngati Porou and the J.N. Williams Memorial Trust.