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Healthy Families Far North takes the healthy workplace message to Far North businesses

The early bird catches the worm and this was certainly the case for the 50-plus Far North business representatives who gathered for the Healthy Families Far North business breakfast this week to hear about workplace health and wellbeing (*NOTE TO EDITORS: Tuesday 12 July*).

Hosted by Healthy Families Far North and Far North District Mayor John Carter at the Ramada Reia Taipa Resort, the 'Healthy Workplace + Healthy Workforce = Healthy Business' breakfast also featured guest speakers The Warehouse Group Ltd Wellbeing Support Manager Phillipa Bennetts and Toi Te Ora Workwell Advisor Hannah Kelly.

Healthy Families NZ is a revolutionary approach to public health that addresses the underlying causes of preventable chronic diseases in 10 communities across New Zealand, including the Far North District extending from Towai in the south to Cape Reinga in the north.

The initiative embodies key work streams including making good food choices, being physically active, sustaining a healthy weight, being smokefree and moderating alcohol consumption in a whole-of-communities, settings-based approach.

One of the key settings are workplaces – in the Far North District alone, 19,080 people are employed in over 7,309 businesses and 75 large businesses employ 20 or more staff.

In his opening address, Far North District Mayor John Carter spoke of the infrastructural developments underway in the District to address health and wellbeing across communities and the ensuing economic impact.

“Community wellbeing is not just about bricks and mortar. It is also more focused on empowering communities and growing our economy. Recently, we have contributed to the development of a Northland Economic Action Plan and collaborated with other Councils on a Northland Strategic Plan which aims to improve economic and social outcomes in Northland,” he said.

The Warehouse Group Ltd Wellbeing Support Manager Phillipa Bennetts presented on the Group's health and wellbeing programme that supports up to 8,000 people in its 92 stores from Kaitaia to Invercargill.



She has developed a keen passion to share her knowledge from over 40 years' service as a registered nurse and developed the programme that was initially piloted in Whangarei, Whakatane, Gisborne and Manukau in order to influence sustainable change.

"Our foundation principle is to look after the environment, the community and its people. A healthy workforce equates to a healthy community – it is impossible to have one without the other," she says.

She says the group places strong emphasis on the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand's 'Winning Ways to Wellbeing' – connecting, giving, taking notice, keeping learning and being active – as a base for positively implementing workplace initiatives.

Toi Te Ora Workwell Advisor Hannah Kelly outlined the key stages of the workplace wellbeing programme offered by the Bay of Plenty-based public health service.

The stages, from engagement through to evaluation and improvement, are carefully designed for adoption by workplaces across a wide variety of sectors and include a range of features, from employee induction programmes to data analysis to accreditation systems.

Healthy Families Far North Manager Allan Pivac said the forum was a successful event marked by positive messages and conversation starters for businesses and employers across the Far North District.

"A healthier Far North starts in the places where we live, learn, work and play and workplaces are more than places of employment. They are environments that have the ability to act as catalysts for change across whole populations and sustain a wider impact for the better."