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Healthy Families Far North walks the talk for public green spaces

Healthy Families Far North is getting back to grassroots conversations in its drive to promote and support public green spaces in Kaitāia.

Bringing back a Kiwi tradition of sandwich board marketing, Healthy Families Far North is taking to the Kaitāia markets to highlight and spark kōrero around the key insights the team has uncovered from recently engaging with the community around new community gardens.

Healthy Families Far North kaiwhakahaere Shirleyanne Brown says taking the research findings to the growers' markets is a deliberate ploy to catch the community during a peak time of social activity.

"We've been undergoing a social design process in Kaitāia with key stakeholders – including Te Roopu Kimiora, Parkdale Reserve community action group Ngā Maramara o Parata, Tuia Nursery, the Far North District Council and a number of key community champion – to explore reinvigorating and reviving green spaces in the Te Hiku community," she says.

Healthy Families Far North's approach – Ka Tupu Te Ora: Growing Health – is articulated in a document that outlines a set of place-based insights, giving the team direction in moving forward improving the health of all the people of the Far North where they live, learn, work and play.

"We've facilitated focus group sessions, key informant interviews and a literature review that have informed us significantly in our mahi. For instance, one of our insights tells us that although Kaitāia means 'abundant food', access to fresh fruit and vegetables is dominated by Pak'n'Save and a handful of smaller retailers. We know for a fact that more green spaces means potential for more community gardens which means more fresh kai for the Kaitāia community," she says.

The next step for the team is to use the insights in the concept design phase for the Kaitāia Hospital community gardens, with the first sod expected to be turned in early



December. In addition, Healthy Families Far North is continuing to engage with the Parkdale Reserve community – including supporting the upcoming Carols in the Park evening set for December 7 – to build on a movement of community good will and revitalisation of its communal backyard.

“One of the key principles in the Healthy Families NZ movement is working collaboratively for collective impact. By designing what our green spaces look like hand in hand with our communities, we feel privileged to be in a position uphold their aspirations and just give it a go,” she says.

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