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### **Kaikohe leading out community health checks, one life at a time**

For many shoppers who came to The Warehouse Kaikohe for pre-Christmas retail therapy this Wednesday 23 November, they came away with an unexpected gift more valuable than money can buy.

The Warehouse, in association with health providers Te Hau Ora o Ngapuhi, Broadway Health, Diabetes Northland, Plunket New Zealand and Healthy Families Far North, offered free heart, blood sugar and carbon dioxide-breath level checks to the community in a bid to empower people to be proactive about managing their health and mark Diabetes Action Month.

Up to 40 people took advantage of the opportunity to gauge their potential predisposition to chronic disease and many came away grateful to be empowered with their personal health information, so as to act on making life changes.

For Allen Toetoe of Kaeo, his high blood sugar levels came as no surprise – not only due to the fact that he had just consumed a sugary drink but also because of his familial history of diabetes.

Likewise, Hokianga-based Mark Carey knew prior that his smoking habit would yield high blood pressure results: "It was very high and I obviously have to give up smoking. Grumble, grumble. But that's another incentive to quit, isn't it?" he said.

Diabetes NZ Northland Branch field officer Claire Paget-Hay said the theme for November's Diabetes Action Month –Eyes on Diabetes – had been marked across Northland with activities such as pre-diabetes screening at Te Hiku Hauora and a wellness day in Hikurangi.

She said of the 12,000 people with diabetes in Northland, 90% will have Type 2 diabetes. Furthermore, she added that people can live with diabetes for ten years without ever being aware they have it, so getting checked early is very important.



“Both type 1 and type 2 diabetes are manageable but it’s all about making healthy food choices, exercising and ensuring you’re keeping on top of regular checks,” she said.

Healthy Families Far North manager Shirleyanne Brown said the turn out of people off the street was encouraging, particularly from men who traditionally are either embarrassed or apathetic about getting their health checked.

“This is a fantastic example of the power of community collaboration to make sure people’s hearts, blood sugars and lungs are in sound working order. This is the proverbial top-of-the-cliff stuff, as opposed to the ambulance at the bottom. Healthy Families Far North is excited about creating ongoing opportunities with our partners to ultimately give people license to control their health, so as to lead full and happy lives,” she said.