



In2it Street Games

Superstar All Black Dan Carter started his career kicking a ball around the backyard. Sir Peter Blake grew up with the sea as his playground. And the great Sir Edmund Hillary first discovered mountains at age 16 and his life changed forever.

And yet, despite what history shows us – that backyard after-school sport is the birth place of champions – too many kids spend their “free time” indoors and inactive, says former school teacher and In2it Trust General Manager Scott Mackenzie.

After-school care has become the norm for many Kiwi kids. There is no neighbourhood to roam, no parks to explore and little opportunity for the thrill of outdoor adventure or risk-taking.

Scott and his team of 35 are determined to bring active play back into the lives of young Aucklanders. Under the In2it Street Games banner, they bring an array of games and specialised equipment to Auckland parks and unused spaces every week, in a convoy of Ford vans, utes and trailers.

In2it Street Games began for Scott after three years of working on a project with similar goals for the North Shore City Council. He discovered “a lot of engagement type ideas that really do work for young people.”

When the North Shore Council ceased to exist, Scott decided to pick up the challenge and a charitable trust was formed in October 2010. “Between then and now, it has just exploded,” he says.

The trust aims to break down barriers that prevent kids from getting active and staying engaged in sport. These can include the cost of getting involved, difficulties accessing sport, and often adult decision-makers ruling out sport because of safety concerns for their children.

To counter these obstacles, In2it Street Games returns to the same locations each week, delivering a consistent service that kids, and parents, will know they can rely on. It provides the use of fun equipment for free, with an inflatable jousting arena, sumo wrestling rings, football pitches, pedal-powered cars, skates, a 50m waterslide and an innovative repertoire of street games.

The time is ripe to start using our environment in different ways, says Scott. There can still be an abundance of play opportunities in the future – providing we use spaces differently.

The concept of street games originated in New York in the 50s and 60s, when kids grew up with no green space and developed games using their familiar urban environment. Stickball, for example, relied on the nearby fire hydrant as first base, a parked car as second and the manhole at the end of the street to mark as a home run. The concept behind street games, says Scott, shows that “any space can be a play space”.

Around 150,000 people have taken part in 2,100 In2it Street Games sessions over the past three years. Scott is now aiming to reach more Auckland communities and kids, with the goal of providing 40 sessions of free play a week all over the city.

In Scott’s own words, “you can never underestimate the value of play”.

For more on the In2it Street Games and charitable trust contact Scott Mackenzie on scott@in2it.org.nz.

