

Hikoi, Saele, Walk!

'Walking: the most ancient exercise and still the best modern exercise!'

The Breeze Walking Festival encourages people from all over the city of Christchurch to get together and enjoy a wide variety of free walks during the first ten days of the September/October school holidays. The festival began three years ago in response to the massive loss of facilities and tracks in the east of Christchurch with the aim of connecting people and places after the earthquakes for social and physical wellbeing. Over 1,000 walkers of all ages and abilities took part in the first festival and everyone involved wanted it to continue. With new residents arriving in Christchurch to help with the rebuild, and people moving across the city due to rezoning, the festival went city wide in 2013. This year the festival expanded even further with walks also in the west and north of the city boundaries.

The 2014 programme consisted of over 38 walks - some were repeated, and was attended by well over 2,000 people of all ages, abilities and cultures plus around 500 dogs stepped out to benefit from what was on offer! The inaugural 'NRG+ Great Dog Walk' was very popular at Roto Kohatu Lakes as was the 'Pukeko Stomp' for young children and their families at Travis Wetland. Another highlight was 'Tou Olo o Saele' where leaders from the Pacific community organised an interactive walk around the neighbourhood of Linwood North with fun activities such as zumba and basketball along the way. This was followed with health information stalls, healthy food, more fun physical activities and cultural performances.

A popular hikoi was organised by He Waka Tapu through the heart of the east and a walk celebrating Chinese National Day was held for the first time attracting over 150 participants. The inner city provided a wealth of walks for hundreds of people with new developments such as Te Papa Otakaro/Avon River Precinct on World River Day, a wander around many gap fillers and transitional projects and a look at the art in the city. Many people also took advantage of guided hill, river and coastal walks with stunning scenery, wildlife, geology and history along the way. Secrets of the Botanic Gardens were shared, people had a go at Nordic walking, geocaching and coast steering. Connections with Antarctica were made and the Wigram and Canterbury Museum offered indoor themed walks. The festival concluded with the All



All Righties stepping out in Hagley Park to promote the Breeze Walking Festival

Right Amble - part treasure hunt and part orienteering event. This popular event also marked the start of Mental Health Awareness Week.

The benefits of walking for wellbeing were easily realised during the festival with the joys of walking together, connecting with nature, new places, old haunts and additional activities. It was also recognised nationally by being awarded the Living Streets Aotearoa Golden Foot Best Walking Project 2014.

Whilst the festival is coordinated by the Christchurch City Council – Community Recreation, the success of the festival is the result of collaborating with partners, sponsors and volunteers to design and deliver the programme. Working closely with these partners is invaluable as they bring innovative ideas, additional resources, networks and leadership. Working together also fosters ongoing relationships and communication for the benefit of the communities we work with. Active Canterbury Network Coordinator Nadine Milmine says *"supporting the walking festival is a positive strategic alignment for Active Canterbury. The festival shares and reflects many of the values associated with the Active Canterbury brand. It provides a tangible way for the Active Canterbury Network to raise its visibility in the community while also supporting an event that lifts the profile of walking and promotes active lifestyles"*.

With all the positive feedback generated from the festival it looks set to continue in 2015 and together we will continue to support ways to encourage people to carry on walking with family, friends and walking groups and take part in other walking events and programmes that are available in their community.

To find out more about the Christchurch walking festival contact Diana Saxton, Community Recreation Advisor, Christchurch City Council on 03 941 6628, email diana.saxton@ccc.govt.nz or go to www.walkingfestival.co.nz.

27 SEPTEMBER - 5 OCTOBER
www.walkingfestival.co.nz

The Breeze Walking Festival