

CiH a success for kids

By MERANIA KARAUARIA

merania.karauaria@wanganuichronicle.co.nz

A PROGRAMME that has placed computers in the homes of low-income Wanganui schoolchildren is being credited with generating a renewed passion for learning and strengthening bonds between schools and families.

Computers in Homes (CiH) has been raising the skill bar for tamariki and their whanau at Te Kura o Kokohuia, Aranui, Castlecliff, Keith Street and Wanganui East Schools.

Last week a presentation was made to 22 whanau at Kokohuia who received their computers in December and during the next three months another 30-35 participants from the schools will begin their training.

Kura Patea said her daughter Natasha, in Year 11 at Kokohuia, used the computer to do her homework and was also learning new skills.

Natasha's 12-year-old sister also benefited from the computer in the home, as did Mrs Patea.

"We have the Numberworx programme installed and this helps Natasha with her maths.

"She is now passionate about her learning and also teaches the whanau her new skills."

Chairman of the CiH steering group, Sue Westwood, said the passion of the headmasters was to be admired for taking up CiH.

"Placing the computers in homes has flow-on benefits for the school community and more whanau were taking advantage of their placement.

"The project has strengthened relationships between whanau and schools and we now have parents standing for the boards of trustees."

The project had also strengthened the positions of the students for entry to secondary schools, Mrs Westwood said.

Evaluation forms were also handed out on the night that would be collected by the steering governance group, which met monthly.



PHOTO: STUARTMUNRO160507VCSMSCHOOLS1

Kura and Natasha Patea at the presentation to mark the success of Computers in Homes at Te Kura o Kokohuia with project co-ordinator Alistair Fraser. Twenty-two families at the kura have received the computers in partnership with the Wanganui District Council.

CiH project co-ordinator Alistair Fraser said computer skills were necessary to bring something new and add to the students' future skills.

"Ucol Whanganui has a vested interest in tertiary education and they provide pathways to CiH to further learning."

He said Ucol was committed to helping families/whanau succeed, with all CiH participating families able to take advantage of the

weekly Ucol student computer clinic and its tutors.

"There are a huge amount of synergies with other learning providers for those in CiH."

This was reinforced with the evaluations that the Government had done so far at Flaxmere in Hawke's Bay.

All participants from Wanganui schools were given evaluation forms, which were then passed to the local CiH steering group.

The steering group which meets monthly:

- Sue Westwood, WDC councillor and chairman of steering group
- Sally Patrick, WDC community and cultural manager
- Bob Dempsey, Wanganui Library, Wanganui Literacy in Employment Research Project
- Nygillhuw (Nigel) Morris, Chamber of Commerce, KiwiWebs
- Di Das, National Computers in Homes Manager
- Laurence Zwimpfer, 2020 Communications Trust
- Craig Sharp, principal, Castlecliff School
- Robin Paul, principal, Wanganui East School
- Sharon Duff, Business Development Manager, Ucol

As Director of 2020 Trust in 2001-2002, Mr Fraser said the trust had entered the Stockholm Challenge in 2001.

"CiH won the educational programme based on Cannons Creek in Porirua and some others that had started in New Zealand.

"The challenge for us now is to grow the project through a bigger uptake by other Wanganui schools," Mr Fraser said.

Microsoft recently announced a software subsidy for governments through their UPLIFT Community Affairs Programme which can be viewed at: <http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/showStory.cfm?ArticleID=7069>

"To qualify, governments must supply computers meant for students' personal use, regardless of their manufacturer," Mr Fraser said.

Microsoft said the computers need not be new, as long as they can run Windows XP.

That meant countries like New Zealand, whose ambitious and ground-breaking CiH project aimed to supply all New Zealand families who were socially and economically disadvantaged, with a refurbished computer, an internet connection, relevant training, and technical support, could also be eligible.

□ The Wanganui District Council, selected in consultation with the project partners, is lead project partner and accountable for the Digital Strategy Community Partnership Fund grant/contract set by the Department of Internal Affairs.

□ The grant started on July 1, 2006, but the consultation with schools to prepare an expression of interest began in November 2005.

□ CiH is the brainchild of the 2020 Communications Trust, which aims to provide access to ICT and the internet to all low income families in New Zealand

– for more information visit the www.computersinhomes.org.nz

□ The CiH project aims to support low income communities to use ICT to strengthen their education – it is more about what ICT can do for family opportunity rather than a hardware dump.

□ Parents enter into an agreement with their children's school to receive a recycled Pentium computer, six months' free internet access, free training and technical support.

□ CiH pays the first six months for dial-up connection, then the whanau are offered a heavily subsidised plan to continue.