

## **Activate for Summer Series:**

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### **Abstract:**

*The presentation will share the successes of Rotorua's Activate for Summer Series which includes three separate 10 week training series, with a focus on beginner cyclists.*

*The programmes within the series require no prior experience and have no fitness requirements. There are three separate programmes in the series, each one targeting a different audience:*

- **Women's Activator**

*For females 12 years and older, with 3 components; road cycling, mountain biking, run/walk and swimming.*

- **Dads n Lads Activator**

*For males 12 years or older. The main component is mountain biking.*

- **Whanau Activator**

*For families with children 5 years or older. Children must be accompanied by at least one participating caregiver or parent. The two main activities in this series are mountain biking and waka tete.*

### **Key goals for the series include:**

- *To increase the skills and confidence of beginners.*
- *To increase the frequency and commitment to physical activity amongst participants, over and beyond the 10 week series.*
- *To provide educational knowledge relevant to healthy lifestyle change e.g. nutrition, bike maintenance.*
- *To introduce participants to the availability of community facilities and parks and to encourage an increase in usage.*

*The positive outcomes of each of these programmes highlight the need for ways of introducing people to cycling in a safe and supportive environment. With the support, knowledge and confidence the programme provides, participants were motivated to continue with regular cycling and in many cases join local clubs.*

### **The Activate for Summer Series:**

The Activate for Summer Series began with just one programme and gradually developed to meet recognized needs within the Rotorua community.

### **Women's Activator:**

Women's Activator, the first programme in the series, is a joint initiative between Rotorua District Council and Sport BOP and has been running since 2005. The 10 week programme provides expert tuition in a safe environment, enabling women to develop their skills and fitness in running, biking and swimming.

Due to the success of the programme a number of partners of participating women suggested a similar series for men.

In 2006 Sport BOP undertook a survey targeting men, to investigate the motivations and barriers to participation in physical activity. Findings included the following:

- That men enjoyed male-only environments.
- They prefer an element of challenge and competition, and are more likely to be motivated in a structured and encouraging environment.
- They enjoyed opportunities to get active with family members.

Based on the survey results and the success of Women's Activator, Dads 'n' Lads was born.

### **Dads 'n' Lads:**

The Dads 'n' Lads initiative focuses on mountain biking only and targets inactive men and boys aged 12 years and up. Actual participant age ranged from 15-65, with the majority aged between 27 and 40.

The series provides beginners with the opportunity to learn mountain biking skills, increase fitness and confidence, make friends and spend quality time with male family members.

Sixty to ninety minute sessions are run weekly over ten weeks to progress participants from basic mountain bike skills requiring no set fitness level, through a gradual build-up of confidence and fitness to more advanced skills. Bike set-up, riding techniques, puncture repair, and stretching were included. Sport BOP enlisted the expertise of two instructors from local cycle shop Bike Vegas to lead each session, and share their enthusiasm for riding.

The initiative introduces participants to Rotorua's Whakarewarewa forest, and its world-class network of mountain biking trails. It aims to develop skills to a level where participants are motivated to continue biking after completing the series.

The programme is "structured but informal," and is designed to be cost effective to make it accessible to the community. Health Rotorua ([www.hrpho.org.nz](http://www.hrpho.org.nz)) funding provides free rental bikes where required so that no-one is excluded on a financial basis

The first series was free but a \$15 charge has since been introduced to place value on the programme and to encourage commitment for the full duration.

Dad's 'n' Lads was promoted through local radio and newspapers, letterbox flyers, Sport BOP's web site, the women's activator participants, Green Prescription, and Family Lifestyle programme.

### **Key benefits**

Participants were surveyed at the start and finish of each series. Results showed significant changes in physical activity levels and in general well-being both at work and at home: Benefits reported were:

- Increased confidence, and self-esteem, both observable and confirmed by participants. (An employer contacted the programme coordinator to say he'd noticed improved focus in two of his employees as a result of their involvement)
- Increased levels of physical activity for other than the participants - all said they had passed on new skills, or gone riding with, family or friends
- Increase in knowledge of the forest tracks and confidence to use them with friends and family. The percentage of participants confident in taking friends and family to use the tracks increased by 50%
- On-going participation in cycling; On completion of the 2008 Dads 'n' Lads programme, the participants started their own monthly riding group, which continued through the 2008-09 summer. Family members and friends joined the group.

A completion certificate and prizes applauding successes were presented at a final ceremony. *"We have had a triple by-pass and heart transplant patients take up this challenge and we have had Dads who have participated thanks to peer pressure from wives, daughters and sons. ... Dads have travelled from Kawerau to Rotorua every Thursday and many have, after only a few weeks, entered the world of competitive mountain biking ... Dads have said 'Hey, I love the feeling I get' and purchased new bikes."* – Sport BOP report

### **Whanau Activator:**

The launch of Whanau Activator in 2009 completed the Activate for Summer Series. Whanau Activator provides for the entire family, 5 years and up, and includes a split of mountain biking and Waka Tete (waka holding 24 paddlers).

### **Conclusion:**

The three programmes, Women's Activator, Dads 'n' Lads, and Whanau Activator, were linked under the name Activate for Summer Series. Each programme follows the same template - a 10 week course delivered in a safe environment and providing an introduction to an active lifestyle.

The concept is highly transferable and has the flexibility to be adjusted to meet the needs of different communities.

Sport BOP has already introduced it to other regions and different activities. In 2009, Kawerau and Opotiki ran kayaking series', while Whakatane focused on Waka Ama.

### **Contacts and links**

To discuss Dads 'n' Lads or the **Activate for Summer** series, contact Jessica Meade on 07 348 4125 or email [jessicam@sportbop.co.nz](mailto:jessicam@sportbop.co.nz)