

## Unite against COVID 19



Mayor Craig Little

### Community Welfare Food Hub

This week councillor Denise Eaglesome-Karekare and I had the privilege of helping and working alongside the other volunteers at the Wairoa Community Welfare Food Hub - and what an amazing experience that was.

This well-oiled machine has distributed around 400 food parcels locally feeding around 1,200 people over the last four weeks.

A month before lockdown Alert Level 4 was announced local service providers and organisations had begun working together, originally as a response to the local economic impacts of COVID-19, in particular job-losses and reduction of work at that time in the forestry industry.

Early responders were the Wairoa Taiwhenua, Te Whare Maire O Tapuwae Whānau Ora Wairoa and Wairoa Financial Literacy Services (food bank) which has been invaluable in sharing advice and networks.

This Wairoa Wellness Network was quickly added to as the COVID-19 situation escalated with Kahungunu Executive, Enabled Wairoa, Wairoa Waikaremoana Māori Trust Board and Age Concern joining in.

An initial \$5,000 pledge from MSD to the Wairoa Taiwhenua got the ball rolling and that has been added to by the Wairoa Taiwhenua and Te Whare Maire O Tapuwae along with numerous produce donations.

This group of selfless volunteers, principally staff from Kahungunu Executive, Enabled Wairoa and Te Whare Maire o Tapuwae have just rolled their sleeves up and got the job done.

The Ministry of Health COVID-19 guidelines set the criteria for who received the parcels which are particularly focussed on vulnerable kaumatua and whānau.

The Foodbanks are delivered by the volunteers and distribution hubs have been set up all around the district with fantastic work being carried out at hubs at Mahia, Nuhaka, Mohaka, and Waikaremoana and smaller hubs at Frasertown, Whakaki, Ruakituri/Te Reinga, HURAMUA and Iwitea.

These people are at the heart of Wairoa's response and I particularly acknowledge the work of Wairoa Taiwhenua and Te Whare Maire o Tapuwae - Whānau Ora, Wairoa who have been there right from the beginning.

Every person who receives a package is so grateful, for the produce but also to know there are people out there looking after them and caring.

AFFCO/Talleys has been tremendous, donating lamb roasts and a tonne of frozen vegetables. Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Inc is providing bins of fruit and vegetables and fresh fish.

Each food parcel comprises essential items and the more that is donated means the less has to be purchased.

Denise and I along with others, delivered the food parcels around town and it was great to see first-hand the difference these packages are making.

We know the recovery won't be quick. People have lost jobs; reduced incomes and it will take time to recover.

Our kaumatua need to stay home and stay safe and these food parcels allow that to happen.

Local people have also benefitted from the delivery of 500 hygiene packs as part of a Whānau Ora North Island wide initiative and particularly targeted for kaumatua katoa and those with high health needs including pregnant mums and those with new-born babies.

One of the highlights for me, working with this team, was to see Wairoa's Non-Governmental Organisations and the Iwi all working together for the community. Don't get me wrong they always work for the good of Wairoa, but this is a real show of solidarity and true collaboration.

This crew has signed up for the long haul and are determined to get our community through the winter.

It was a real eye-opener to see how busy they are and the difference they are

making. If you know of elderly or vulnerable people who fit the criteria, please phone the Civil Defence welfare number 0800 422 923.

### New World

I shopped at New World supermarket this week and was so impressed with what I saw. The staff are so professional and have been keeping our supermarket running and ensuring the products and produce we need is on the shelves, well done to you all. I spoke with owner Brookes Stewart and asked him what it had been like during lockdown. His reply, "great, because of the behaviour of the people of Wairoa". So, thank you Wairoa shoppers for helping make a difficult time easier.

### Alert Level 4 remains in place

On Monday, the Government announced we will be remaining in Alert level 4 until midnight on Monday (April 27).

It is so important people stick to the lock down. We have done so well; now is not the time to break the rules. Now is not the time to be complacent. We must strengthen our resolve, and all unite so that next Tuesday we are in a strong position for the drop to Alert Level 3.

If you are not at work, school, exercising or getting essentials then you must be at home, the same as at Alert Level 4.

If you need advice and information, there is a wealth of information online at [www.covid19.govt.nz](http://www.covid19.govt.nz), and you can also call the free government helpline on 0800 779 997 (8am to 1am, seven days a week).

### Post-pandemic

I want to reassure our business community that there is a lot of background work going on to assist our local businesses and retailers post-pandemic.

Council has also partnered with Tātau Tātau o Te Wairoa Trust, the Post-Settlement Governance Entity, delivering a business wellness initiative, Pākihi Ora, to support Wairoa businesses in the wake of COVID-19.

I encourage our community to support local businesses as much as they can. By shopping locally, we can help keep our very necessary businesses to stay afloat.

### AFFCO Lamb drive

I am thrilled with the offer from AFFCO to process 100 lambs free of charge.

We now need farmers to come on board and donate lambs so we can maximise this opportunity for our community.

Once they have been processed the lambs will be given to the Wairoa Community Welfare Food Hub for distribution.

The more donations the hub receives the less money they will need to spend on buying product for the food parcels.

I really hope our local farmers take this seriously and get behind the cause. Even take leadership for your area and organise a group of you to donate lambs and leave them at the designated pick up point.

If you don't have any lambs but would like to support the concept then we would welcome cash donations which could go towards transport and additional meat processing such as making sausages.

This is our chance to support our community and help others.

To donate please call or text my mobile 027 475 72 78.

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