

Media Release

Kerikeri – Thursday, 25 February 2010



100,000 WaterSafe lesson contacts for Far North kids!

The Top Energy WaterSafe Programme reached another giant milestone yesterday, with a celebration to mark the 100,000th lesson contact with Far North junior school children.

At the Karikari Peninsula's Matai Bay, sponsor Top Energy and WaterSafe programme administrator, Sport Northland celebrated the occasion with children from Pompallier, Pukepoto, Paparore, Hata Maria and Oturu schools.

The children were exposed to the very serious business of ocean survival - through fun activities including, experiencing marine reserves, beach education, gathering kai moana, safe boating, kayaking, life jacket drills, snorkelling, beach volleyball and flippa ball and a sand castle competition.

WaterSafe is an educational programme which teaches primary school children graduated learn to swim and personal water survival skills and has been sponsored by Top Energy since 1997.

Back in 2005, the WaterSafe Programme achieved its first major milestone - celebrating its 50,000th lesson contact with Far North children. The programme was also officially recognised by New Zealand's national water safety body, Water Safety New Zealand, with the presentation of a Merit Award - as creating the benchmark for teaching children how to swim and keep safe around water.

The following year, WaterSafe won the New Zealand Recreation Association's Outstanding Programme Award.

In November 2009, Sport Northland won a New Zealand Water Safety Award in the Prevention Category, the first time such an award has been presented in New Zealand.

It can be difficult for the country's remote communities and those without a lot of financial support to get access to professional water survival training, but Sport Northland and Top Energy have succeeded in developing a partnership - which has provided an excellent and successful service to the Far North community and which could well serve as a model for other communities to follow.

In a presentation to mark WaterSafe's 100,000th lesson contact, young Nathan Edwards was presented a commemorative certificate.

According to Top Energy CEO, Russell Shaw, the WaterSafe Programme is a major commitment to keeping the region's young children safe. "With many of our communities close to beaches, rivers or lakes, making sure they can survive around water makes perfect sense to us. We're delighted that our partnership with Sport Northland has helped pass these vital life-skills on to the children over the last 12 or so years", he said.

Shaw also believes the WaterSafe Programme fits well with other educational programmes his company sponsors; *The Far North Science & Technology Fair* – which is an effective hands-on way to promote science and technology to secondary school students, while helping them to develop investigative and problem-solving life-skills and the *YES Northland Programme* – that is part of the broader Education for Enterprise Programme, which fosters an enterprise culture in Northland secondary schools, by focussing the curriculum in a way where students can see the relevance of their learning – and to help them develop into enterprising people. It's a year-long experiential business learning programme, where year 11 through 13 students form start-up companies, become directors and follow their own business plans to develop products/services which they market and sell. END.

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Left to right: Top Energy CEO, Russell Shaw with Nathan Edwards, Colleen Atchison, Sport Northland Business Development Manager and Esther Hone-Moore, Top Energy WaterSafe Facilitator.

THE TOP ENERGY WATERSAFE PROGRAMME in Summary:

The Top Energy WaterSafe Programme teaches kids graduated learn-to-swim and personal survival skills and is designed to allow them to enter and advance through progressive swimming levels at their own pace. Top Energy's sponsorship also enables its Instructors to train teachers and parent helpers as Instructors in participating schools.

There are five separate components to the programme, which are:

- 1) Learn to swim & water survival instruction in school pools, using a nationally recognised 5-level sequential learning programme. Teachers have the opportunity to observe Instructors teaching swimming skills to various ability groups within their class.
- 2) A 6-hour Instructors training course for teachers, which includes practical pool sessions, principles of water safety and risk management, progressive methods of teaching strokes, effective skill teaching methods and swimming lesson planning. In addition, there is a 20-hour practical teaching requirement.
- 3) Assistance in planning and effective aquatic programme in school and/or teaching in-service.
- 4) Day at the beach, to learn how to be Beach Safe – learning about rips, currents, waves, SunSmart and then some fun activities on the beach.
- 5) A Non-swimmers 10-lesson programme which specifically targets those older primary school kids that have been identified by their schools as being unable to swim.