

Media Release

Kaikohe, Tuesday 22 February 2005



WaterSafe Programme hits the 50,000 mark!

After 8 successive seasons running in Mid and Far North primary schools, the Top Energy WaterSafe Programme has today achieved a giant milestone - celebrating its 50,000th lesson contact with Northland kids!

Local line company and Sponsor Top Energy has always considered its WaterSafe Programme a very worthwhile community sponsorship. And it now seems the Company's faith in its swimming education programme has paid real dividends, if a recent release of Northland drowning statistics is any yardstick.

Over the eight years since the WaterSafe Programme has been running in Mid and Far North primary schools, Northland's drowning statistics have reduced dramatically, especially for kids under 15 years. Over the five year period from 1995 to 1999, there were 75 deaths by drowning in Northland. Of those, 14 were aged under 15 years. By comparison, over the following five years from 2000 to 2004, a total of 56 deaths were recorded and of those, the number under 15 years had fallen to 4.

Whilst Sponsors Top Energy and Programme Directors, Sport Northland don't claim the WaterSafe Programme is directly responsible for this life saving reduction, they are certain the Programme has achieved remarkable results with the tens of thousands of kids whose water survival skills have been improved - as a result of the many hours of swimming and beach survival lessons provided by the Programme's Instructors.

Water Safety New Zealand Executive Director Alan Muir said, "The Top Energy WaterSafe Programme is a leading light in the drive to give every child the opportunity to learn swim and survive skills. The WaterSafe Programme has made the vital link between SwimSafe training and actually getting children in the water learning essential water safety skills. The value this adds to the community in awareness and knowledge is immeasurable as it impacts across multiple generations."

To mark the Programme's achievement of 50,000 lesson contacts with Northland kids, Opua Primary School student, Maraea Tipene was presented with a certificate.

When making the presentation, Top Energy Chairman, Jack Poutsma said, "Top Energy is thrilled by the support for the programme provided by the community, the schools and teachers and I congratulate Opua School and Maraea for their involvement. The fact that 50,000 lesson contacts have been provided so far, was testimony to the support received and the success of the programme

format.” Mr Poutsma expressed confidence that the programme would continue to help improve drowning statistics in the North.

Mr Poutsma also presented Opuia Primary School with a trophy, to commemorate the occasion.

TOP ENERGY WATERSAFE PROGRAMME:

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 SwimSafe 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 the nationally recognised 5-level Lotto SwimSafe sequential learning programme. Teachers have the opportunity to observe Instructors teaching swimming skills to various ability groups within their class.
- 2) A 6 hour Swim Safe 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 an effective aquatic programme in school and/or teaching in-service.
- 4) A day at the beach, to learn how to be Beach Safe – learning about rips, currents, waves, being 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. It focused on selected schools for the first time this year, with the intention of expanding to other schools in the region next season.

Sport Northland’s Chief Executive, Brent Eastwood says the contribution that Top Energy has made to the community over the past 8 years has been amazing. “Without Top Energy’s support, Sport Northland would not have been able to develop the WaterSafe initiative. The Far North region is extremely fortunate to have this programme available to schools, which has only been made possible by funding from Top Energy”, Mr Eastwood said.

