

Virtual whanaungatanga gets whanau healthier and fitter during lockdown



Wilhelmina Manuel-Sadlier and her sister get a free flu jab at a community pop-up clinic.

One of Wellington's biggest Māori health services is getting whānau healthier and fitter under lockdown using virtual whanaungatanga.

Staff and whānau at Kokiri Marae Health and Social Services have been running Facebook live events offering everything from dance exercise classes to community cooking tips. The online initiative took off when New Zealand went to COVID-19 Alert Level 4.

Each morning, staff start the day with a live-stream featuring a karakia and waiata.

The service's communications co-ordinator Ngapera Mei said this was typically followed by a korero from their general manager, Teresea Olsen, who "advises on the state of the nation and the communities we are currently working with".

Under the Kokiri Marae umbrella sits the Takiri Mai te Ata health collective, which consists of seven health, education, justice and social service providers in the Wellington, Porirua and Hutt Valley regions.

The service has been especially busy offering help during lockdown. They've delivered more than 600 food parcels which contain a week's worth of essential food items in collaboration with Common Unity Aotearoa, and ensured the most vulnerable people, such as kaumatua, get free flu jabs.

The service continues to provide 24/7 support to the Māori Women's Refuge, the Takiri Marae Regional Stop Smoking programme, and social workers continue to actively engage with whānau on a daily basis ensuring their social and mental wellbeing is at the forefront.

To help keep people active, exercise instructors Leilani Waitai and Putiputi Temara Facebook live a daily Dance Fit routine for whānau who wish to put on their boogie shoes and get their workout in for the day.

"It is important for our whānau to still be active for their overall health and wellbeing," Ngapera said.

"Our Dance Fit coordinators really know how to get whānau off their couches and moving even if it's for a short while."

The page's latest addition is the Kokiri Marae Kai on Lock online foodies group, featuring home recipes, photos and tips.

"It became apparent that our whānau wanted to engage with other whānau over the lockdown period and to bring a sense of normality to their lives.

"We decided to set up an online cooking page so whānau can interact and be inspired by one another, taking virtual whanaungatanga to new heights."