PLANTING IN THE KUKU VALLEY

A long term planting project is taking shape near Rimutaka Prison in the Kuku Valley in Upper Hutt. Under the guidance of community work supervisors, offenders sentenced to community work are planting native trees grown in the prison’s nursery. All the plants are eco-sourced, meaning the nursery has a record of what area the seed came from, so it can be returned to the same area as a sapling.

The planting project is part of the prison’s land management programme and has been underway for several years. In 2014, the nursery supplied 32,760 plants to the project. Around 90 offenders have been involved in the planting.

Eddie Hill, one of the community work supervisors overseeing offenders, says his team “love the work”.

BIRD BOXES, BIKES AND A BBQ

Painting bird boxes, riding bikes and enjoying a BBQ were some of the activities Hawke’s Bay Regional Prison organised as part of a family fun afternoon to enhance children’s visits to their fathers.

The prison’s low security unit hosted the afternoon for the unit’s prisoners and their families before Christmas. The children painted bird boxes made by their dads, and the best painted boxes were rewarded with a kete made by the unit’s harakeke (flax weaving) team.

An essay-writing competition for children saw one happy six year old taking home a bike reconditioned by the unit’s community bike team for himself and his mother. Hawke’s Bay’s Community Policing team supported the competition and provided two new helmets.

Principal Corrections Officer Junior Wilkie was instrumental in making it all happen. “It can be tough for a child to visit a parent in jail. We want to enhance the experience children have when they come to see dad, and we want families to remain connected because it helps with the men’s rehabilitation.”

Not surprisingly, feedback about the activities was positive.

“It was great to see the men actively engaged in helping their children with the activities we organised. There were lots of happy faces,” says Junior.

Reconditioning bikes is an initiative between Hawke’s Bay Regional Prison, Hawke’s Bay Community Police and Hastings District Council. Police provide unclaimed bikes to the prison to be reconditioned; once the bikes are road-ready, they’re returned to police who donate them to the local community.