

Close to Home

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Age is just a number for local Timaru legend



John the Scooter

In his hometown of Timaru, John is better known by his alter ego, Scooter.

John, a Kāinga Ora customer, earned that moniker because he scooters everywhere around Timaru and because his renowned

online videos draw attention to everything from footpath maintenance and litter problems to questionable displays of driving.

“I’m known for getting around town on my scooter, but I never want to be defined by my disability,” explains 78-year-old John, who has a spinal condition that affects his mobility.

“Ever since I completed a computing course in 1994, I’ve loved the fun and self-expression you can have online and through social media.

“The videos I create are a bit of good fun for me, and they bring a smile to people’s faces, which is a bonus. All the new technology has taken a bit of keeping up with, but I enjoy it and it keeps me busy.

“Social media is a great tool for staying connected with your community and I wish more people of my generation gave it a whirl,” John says.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 02

Close to Home goes digital

We now deliver Close to Home digitally via email-only to all customers who have provided Kāinga Ora with their email address. By receiving this issue in your mailbox it means you may not have your email registered with us.

Join us in saving waste by going digital

All you need to do is make sure Kāinga Ora has your current email address. To do this, register with MyKāingaOra, or contact our **Customer Support Centre on 0800 801 601.**



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

Age is just a number for local Timaru legend



Increasing mobility issues mean John is not producing as many videos as he used to, but there's been an unexpected upside to that – he now has more time to enjoy his newly retrofitted home.

John has been living in his Kāinga Ora home for nearly four decades, but recently it was upgraded to make it warmer, drier and more energy efficient, and to extend its lifespan. The house now has a new kitchen and bathroom, a fresh lick of paint, and new double-glazing throughout.

"I've lived in this lovely home for more than 37 years, but it's never been as good as this," John says.

"The new windows keep the heat in much better than the old ones did and my power bills in the colder months are a lot smaller now. The new kitchen and bathroom are so much easier to use. I'm so grateful to Kāinga Ora for this place and the retrofit improvements.

"Now I just need to get my own facelift!" John jokes.

Kāinga Ora home a place to make new memories



Blenheim mum Maria and her whānau gather around the dining table in the kitchen of their Kāinga Ora home every day, connecting with each other over kai.

"It's very important to have breakfast, lunch and tea at the table together," Maria says.

After losing both parents while she was still at high school in Hamilton, Maria has had to adjust to life without them, while starting her own family.

Living in a stable home where she's been able to create her own traditions and memories with her 14-year-old son and 13-year-old daughter has played a big part in her healing process.

"I don't have my parents around, so it was very important to me to find my own place in the world. I needed to establish my own identity. To be able to provide us with a safe and secure home is more than I could ever ask for," she says.

Maria, who is of Tainui, Ngāti Porou and Ngāti Raukawa descent, continues to honour her whakapapa (family history). Photos of her whānau and ancestors line the walls of her home. Maria's mother was one of the first teachers to start up a Kura Kaupapa (Māori language school), and now Maria is a te reo Māori tutor.

After volunteering at the local community gardens for four years, Maria now works part-time at Bunnings, where she organises community projects and kids' DIY workshops.

"I love working there because I get to be with plants. I love gardening and I'm in a space where I get to use my knowledge," she says.

Maria's home has recently been significantly renovated, as part of a Kāinga Ora programme to make older homes warmer and drier. After several months' living in temporary accommodation provided by Kāinga Ora, Maria was overwhelmed at the way her home had been transformed when she and her family returned. "I cried when we came back home after the work was done. My first thought was, "Oh my gosh, my home!"

Maria is now saving hard so she can buy her own home, a place where she and her family can continue to make happy memories together. "I'm really focusing on achieving my goal of owning a home. I'm just trying to take it one step at a time so I don't get overwhelmed," she says.

The impact of blessing new homes for Tairāwhiti whānau



Kāinga Ora customers with pakeke (elders) from the local Rongowhakaata iwi, Morehu Pewhairangi (Kaikorero), Theo Akroyd (Senior Stakeholder, Kāinga Ora) Vicky Ngata (Advisor Placements, Kāinga Ora).

Morehu has blessed many of the 90 new homes Kāinga Ora has built in Gisborne in the last two years. As a kaikarakia based in Tairāwhiti, he knows that a blessing is a very important part of providing homes for whānau who haven't had anywhere suitable to live.

"Before anyone moves in, we perform karakia and walk through the homes touching the walls and sprinkling water. This is done to cleanse the home and implant mauri (spiritual energy) into the whare (house)."

Morehu recently blessed two new quality homes built by the Iconiq Trade Academy. The two new homes have been built to full universal design standards so they can be easily adapted for people with accessibility challenges. The homes have been placed at the back of existing Kāinga Ora homes that had large sections.

This makes the best use of our limited land that is close to schools, shops and services.

Morehu was joined by the whānau who are moving into homes and pakeke (elders) from the local Rongowhakaata iwi. "Having our nannies and papas along helps us to make sure we're doing the right thing and keeps us safe."

One of the people moving into the new Gisborne homes says, "I really wanted to be at the blessing as it's part of my culture, and it's important to make the home feel safe before my whānau move in."

He has been living in a severely overcrowded home. At times there can be 15 people staying in the three-bedroom home. He is moving close by with his partner and his niece. "It is good Kāinga Ora is blessing these homes," he says.



Kaikarakia Morehu opening the door of the new home he is about to bless.

"We wouldn't move into a new home before it was blessed and we knew we were protected."

Morehu's grandfather was also a kaikarakia. His extensive whānau connections in Tairāwhiti help him to connect with many of the people who move into the new homes.

"When we can connect through our tīpuna (ancestors) this has a huge effect on how the whānau feel as the whare is blessed," says Morehu.

Karakia, or blessings, are like markers to indicate a move into another stage of your life. It is one of the steps towards overall wellbeing that a warm, dry, secure home contributes to whānau.

Winter health and wellness for you and your whānau

Prepare for winter, protect yourself and your whānau, ask and act quickly if you get sick.

To **prepare**, getting the flu vaccination is our first line of defence. This is free for those most likely to get very sick – including everyone aged 65 and over. See bookmyvaccine.health.nz or call 0800 28 29 26.

Protect yourself and others by staying home if you're sick, and keeping away from young children, pregnant people and those aged 65 years and over. Wear a mask when you're in public, especially in a crowded place, and test using a RAT test if you have COVID-19 symptoms.

Ask and act early if you or someone you know gets sick – most winter illnesses can be managed at home. If you need advice, contact your healthcare provider, doctor or Healthline – **0800 611 116** anytime 24/7 free of charge. You can also talk to your community pharmacist or visit an Urgent Care Clinic. Call 111 in an emergency.

Check **Healthpoint** for details of these services.

Other health concerns include ongoing risk from **COVID-19, whooping cough, rheumatic fever, asthma and measles if not immune** – visit info.health.nz/immunisations for advice or talk to your healthcare provider.

For more information, go to info.health.nz. If you are on Spark, Skinny, One NZ, 2degrees, Warehouse, Slingshot or Orcon mobile, go to zero.govt.nz for access without data charges.

Look after your pets as the chill kicks in

We all like to wrap up warmly and keep cosy as cold and wet weather sets in, and our pets are just like us. You'll have happy, healthy pets over winter with these top tips:

Shelter and warmth

If you're feeling cold, it's likely your pets are too. Keep them safe from bad weather by bringing them indoors when you can. If your pet lives outdoors, make sure they have access to shelter that is warm, well-insulated, waterproof and windproof.

Food and water

Animals are less likely to go outside in the cold, so using toys and puzzle feeders at meal times can be great for their mental and physical health. It's also a good idea to check outdoor water bowls each day to make sure they haven't frozen over, or to break up any ice if they have.

Exercise safely

Our pups love their walkies, even when it's cold or rainy. Try to keep heading out each day to keep them healthy and their minds stimulated. Reflective leads and harnesses make pets easier to keep an eye on during dark mornings or evenings.

Household emergency plans must account for all members of the whānau, and this includes your animals.

Visit sca.nz for more winter tips.

Make every sleep a safe sleep for your baby

There are four steps to making sure your baby has a safe sleep – and these spell PEPE:

- 1 **Place** baby in their own baby bed in the same room as you
- 2 **Eliminate** smoking in pregnancy and protect baby from smoke
- 3 **Position** baby flat on their back with their face clear of bedding
- 4 **Encourage** and support breastfeeding and gentle handling of baby

If you choose to share your bed with your baby, keep them safe by putting them beside you in their own baby bed – a wahakura or Pēpi Pod® or similar.

For more information and support about safe sleep call PlunketLine 24/7 on 0800 933 922 or visit plunket.org.nz

PlunketLine is a free parent helpline and advice service.



plunket
whānau āwhina


WINTER FIRE SAFETY

Every year, colder weather means more house fires happen across Aotearoa.


See a fire before it starts

 **A metre from the heater** – keep everything at a safe distance

It's tempting to hang winter laundry near a heater. But unless it's a metre away, your clothes are a fire waiting to happen.

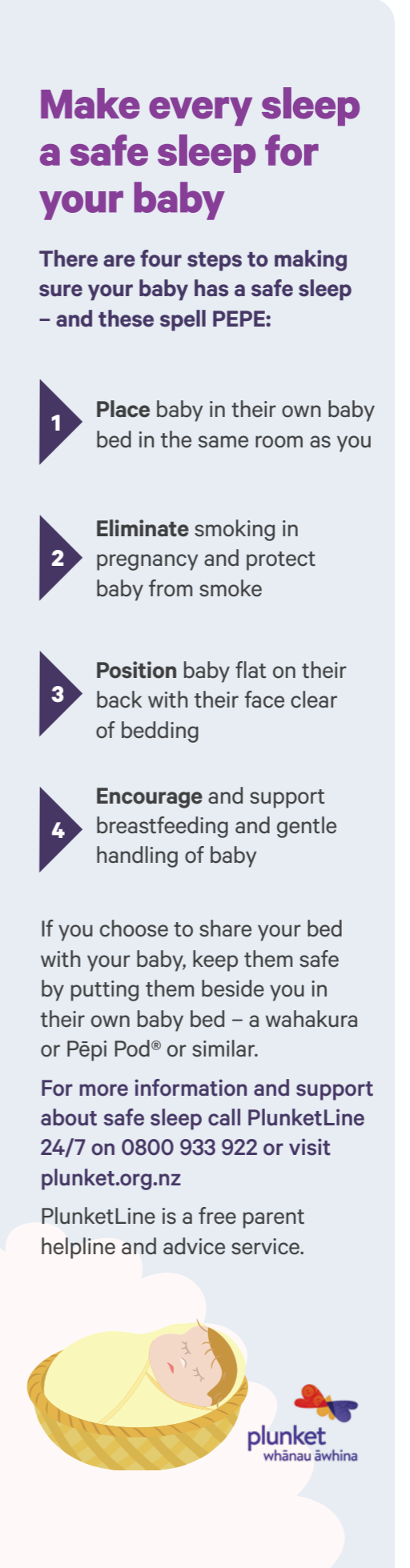
 **A clean dryer avoids a fire** – remove lint before every use

If your dryer's filter fills with lint, it can easily catch fire. Remove the risk by getting rid of lint build up before every use.

 **Cool ash before you stash** – fireplace ash holds heat for up to five days and can spark new fires

Always soak it with water in a metal bucket before binning it.

For more information visit fireandemergency.nz/



Rheumatic fever prevention

Get sore throats checked

Rheumatic fever starts with a sore throat that is known as ‘strep throat’. Most sore throats get better on their own after about four days. But if strep throat is not treated with antibiotics, it can cause rheumatic fever in at-risk children and young people.

All sore throats in Māori and Pacific children and young people (aged 4-19 years) need to be checked, especially if you live in Northland, Auckland, around Rotorua and Taupō, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne and the East Coast, Hawke’s Bay, Wellington, or Hutt Valley.



Where to get checked

There are lots of places you can have a sore throat checked.

- You can go to your doctor or nurse. You may have to pay a fee; phone ahead to check. Let the receptionist know you have a child with a sore throat, in case they have nurses available to respond quickly.
- Contact your child’s school to find out if they have a free sore throat checking programme.
- Contact your local pharmacy to find out if they provide sore throat checking.
- You can call Healthline on 0800 611 116 if you have immediate concerns about your child’s sore throat.

What is rheumatic fever?

Rheumatic fever is an autoimmune disease. It happens when your immune system makes a mistake and attacks other parts of your body, as well as the strep throat germs.

Most strep throats get better and don’t lead to rheumatic fever. However, in a small number of people, an untreated strep throat develops into rheumatic fever, where the heart, joints (elbows and knees), brain and skin become inflamed and swollen.

The risk of getting rheumatic fever gets higher when someone has repeated untreated strep throat infections.

What are the symptoms of rheumatic fever?

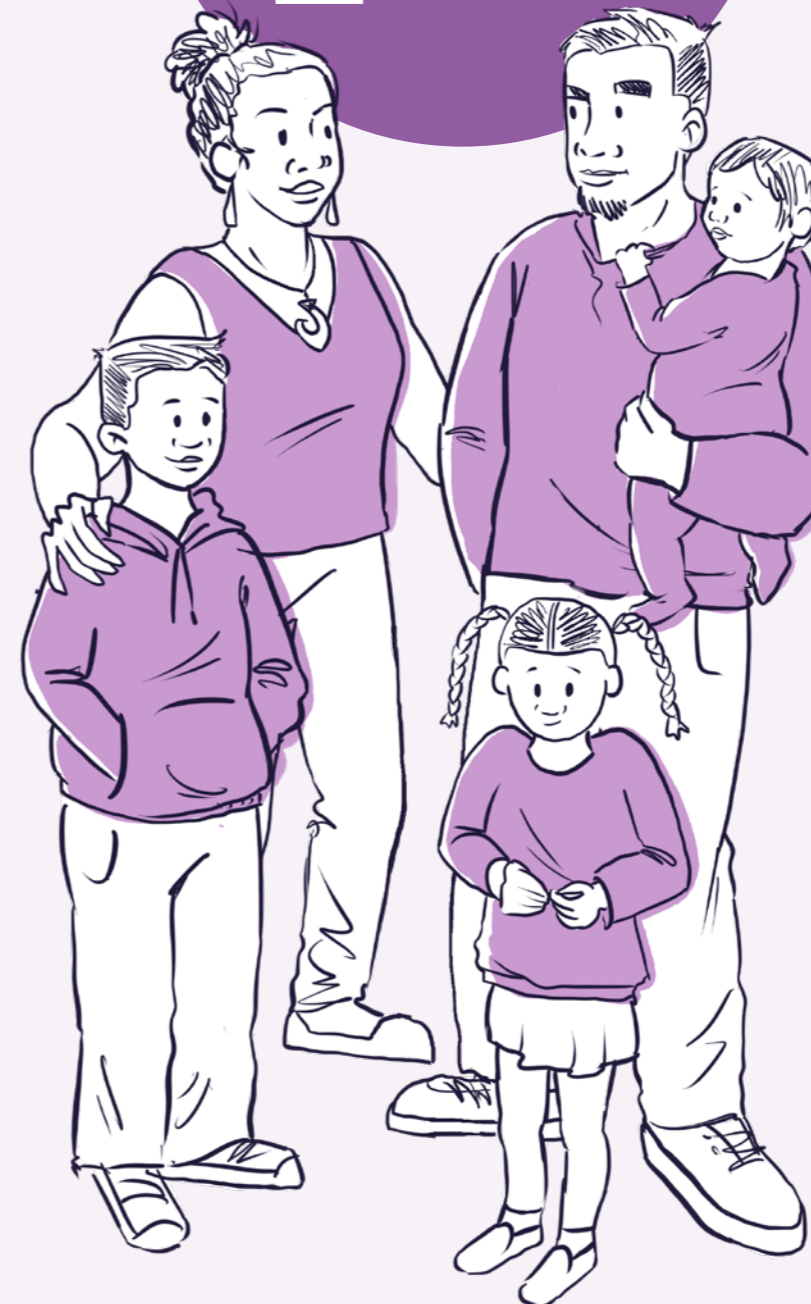
Rheumatic fever usually starts 1-5 weeks after your child has had strep throat. Your child may develop:

- **sore and swollen joints** (knees, elbows, ankles and wrists). Joints may feel hot as well; and different joints may be sore on different days
- **an ongoing fever** that lasts a few days
- **a rash over** their elbows, wrists, knees, ankles and spine
- **small lumps** under their skin
- **unusual jerky movements** of hands, feet, tongue and face
- **a fever** of or higher than 38 degrees Celsius
- **stomach pains**
- **weight loss**
- **extreme tiredness.**

Rheumatic fever usually starts **1-5 weeks** after your child has had strep throat.

For more information about rheumatic fever visit info.health.nz/rheumatic-fever

If your child has signs or symptoms of rheumatic fever, take them to a doctor or nurse straight away to be checked



Wellbeing in
Kāinga Ora Communities

Our **2024** Survey is
Now Open!

Go to: tehotongahapori.ac.nz/survey
Or scan the QR code



Participant
prize draw
**5 iPads
TO BE WON**

WIN

AUT





CHECK THE HEAT BEFORE YOU SLEEP

CHECK YOUR ELECTRIC BLANKET FOR HOT SPOTS BEFORE FIRST USE

340°C

56 °C

210 °C

15°C

EVERY WINTER, HOUSE FIRES IN NEW ZEALAND INCREASE BY 30%

Check for hotspots in your electric blanket by turning it on high for 15 minutes, then switching it off and running your hand over the blanket.

If you use an electric blanket, make sure:

- Blankets are less than five years old
- Blankets are rolled during storage, not folded
- Cords and controls are not twisted, and the blanket lies flat on the bed
- Heavy objects are never placed on the bed while the electric blanket is in use
- Blankets are always turned off before going to sleep.

Helping you and your family stay warm and healthy

We spend a lot of time in our homes over winter, and we enjoy that more if we feel warm and dry. Be sure to heat bedrooms and other rooms you spend time in. Remember, drier air is easier and cheaper to heat, and stopping moisture building up helps prevent mould.

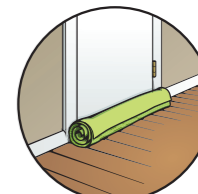
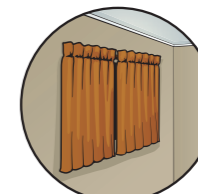


Keep the damp air out, air it out!

- Dry windows by wiping off moisture with an old towel in the morning if required
- Dry clothes outside as much as you can
- Use your rangehood when cooking
- Use your bathroom fan when showering or bathing and keep the fan going at least until the mirror and walls are dry.

Warm your home, keep it warm!

- Use heaters when it is cold and set your heater thermostats at 18–20°C to keep healthy and save money
- Open curtains during the day to use free heat from the sun
- Turn your heater(s) on as the sun starts to go down to keep the temperature steady.



Air it out!

- Open windows twice every day (for 10 minutes) to let damp out, even in winter
- Keep beds and mattresses damp-free by keeping them out from the wall far enough to let air circulate
- Raise mattresses off the floor to let the air dry them out daily (if possible) especially if people are sharing a room for sleeping.

Keep the heat in!

- Close curtains in the evening as the sun goes down to keep the day's heat in
- If there is a gap below a door, using a proper draught-stopper will help keep warm air in
- Call us if you feel a draught coming from windows, external doors or walls.

Got your curtains sorted?

Curtains are especially important during the colder months to keep the warmth from the day in once the sun goes down. If you don't have curtains, or feel your current ones aren't in good condition, speak to your Housing Support Manager.

Tips to save you energy

A big power bill is difficult at any time, but can be especially tough in winter. Scan the QR code for some easy ways to cut down on power, helping you save cash and the environment.



Mexican spiced tomato soup

READY IN: 50 MINUTES

SERVES: 4-6 as a meal with cheesy scones for dunking

This dish is filling, nourishing and really savoury. Red lentils are a good source of protein, iron and fibre and contain no fat; they also cook quickly giving this soup a thick satisfying, hearty character in a relatively short time. It's good with some cheesy bread or scones for dunking.

YOU WILL NEED:

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 onions, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 3 tsp Mexican seasoning – see below
- 2 400g cans chopped tomatoes
- 1½ cups uncooked red lentils, rinsed
- 6 cups of beef stock – allow 1 heaped tsp of stock powder per cup of water – see tips for vegetarians
- ½ cup tomato paste
- 2 Tbsp brown sugar
- ½ cup of chopped fresh coriander or parsley
- Sour cream to serve – optional



MEXICAN SEASONING:

Measure into an airtight container or jar, shake well and store with your spices.

- 1 heaped Tbsp ground cumin
- 2 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp oregano
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 Tbsp ground chilli

1. In a large saucepan heat the oil, add the onion and garlic and cook until soft.
2. Stir in the Mexican seasoning, tomatoes, lentils, stock and tomato paste. Bring to a simmer.
3. Stir in the sugar and simmer, stirring from time to time, for 45 minutes, till the soup is thick and lentils are tender.
4. Serve topped with a dollop of sour cream and a sprinkling of fresh herbs.

TIP:

To make this vegetarian, swap the beef stock for vegetable stock and add a dash of soy sauce or a spoonful of miso for a hit of umami savoury flavour.

SLOW COOKER:

You can make this in the slow cooker. It's a bit blander – that's slow cookers for you, but there are some days when you just don't care. Prepare the recipe to the end of step 1. Reduce the stock by 1 cup. Place all the ingredients except coriander and sour cream into the slow cooker and cook on high for around 6 hours or low for 8 hours. Season and add a dollop more tomato paste if needed. Serve with chopped fresh coriander and sour cream as usual.

100,000 native plants to help grow local careers



Over the next three years, the Environmental Cadetship programme will help local residents from eastern Porirua gain valuable qualifications and on-the-job training, while seeing more than 100,000 native plants planted through Bothamley and Cannons Creek parks.

The programme is a collaboration of Te Rā Nui – Eastern Porirua Development partners (Kāinga Ora, Porirua City Council and Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira) along with local jobs and skills providers Le Fale, Mahi Toa and Rāranga Building Careers.

“Te Rā Nui has always been so much more than building warmer, drier homes for eastern Porirua,” says Will Pennington. “It’s about working in partnership to also help enhance things like education, job opportunities and training, public transport, water infrastructure, and local amenities, so our local residents can live their best lives.”

If you want to read more, or if you live in Porirua and want to get involved in planting in your community, scan the QR code for more information.



Growing kai and communities



Sazshia with Debra Wynn (Community Fruit Harvest Manawatū).

Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou ka ora ai te iwi

With your food basket and my food basket our people will thrive

Kāinga Ora customer and mum of two Sazshia is now busy raising veggies alongside her children, thanks to a partnership between the Manawatū Food Action Network, UCOL and Kāinga Ora.

Planter boxes are built by students at UCOL in Palmerston North as part of their building and construction course, and delivered and installed by the Manawatū Food Action Network. To keep the vegetables and whānau thriving, the food action group also provides

advice and guidance on caring for the plants.

Sazshia is one of 80 whānau in Manawatū to receive a planter box through the initiative, which aims to improve wellbeing through kai security.

After receiving the planter box, Sazshia made a deal with her children to learn about gardening and grow their own kai.

“They wanted a pet, so I made them a deal: if they could grow and look after two tomato plants each, we would discuss getting one. Fortunately, they weren’t good plant parents, so we compromised by getting a fish,” Sazshia says.

“I love spending time with my kids in the garden and showing them where, how, and what type of kai we can grow and eat. We also explore their favourite vegetables, and I encourage them to try every veggie at least once because we’ve grown them in our own garden.”

From humble beginnings growing only tomatoes, Sazshia’s garden is now home to peppers, lettuces, cabbages, cauliflowers, capsicums, rosemary, chives, and lemon basil and she’s busy sharing her newfound knowledge with others. Through volunteering at several community organisations, including Just Zilch Food Rescue and Community Fruit Harvest Manawatū, Sazshia also

supports other whānau who have received a planter box to grow kai and connect.

“There are so many benefits to growing your own kai: it saves you money that can be spent on other things, and more importantly you get a proud feeling when you are harvesting and eating your own food as a reward. That’s why I share my knowledge with others.”

Manawatū Food Action Network Coordinator Daniel Morrimire says that enabling whānau to grow kai in their own backyard is making a significant difference to their lives.

“Since 2022 we’ve been delivering planter boxes complete with compost and seedlings to Kāinga Ora homes across the area,” says Daniel.

“These families have developed their skills and knowledge on caring for plants and growing kai. In addition, they’re creating new connections with neighbours, feeling a sense of belonging and being part of a community.”

For Sazshia, the installation of the new waist-high planter box made an immediate difference in her life.

“A few years ago, I was diagnosed with major heart failure. The height of the planter box saves me the need to bend over, which would cost me a lot more energy, and means I’ve really been able to make the most of this opportunity.

“I think this is an awesome initiative being offered to Kāinga Ora whānau and I hope many more will give it a try. I am sure it will bring them a lot of happiness.”

Winter gardening tips

The star constellations of Te waka o Rangi and Matariki (pleiades) have set in the west, Tamanuiterā (the sun) journeys across the sky on his shorter path to Hinetakurua (sirius), and we can all feel that winter has truly arrived.

As soil temperatures drop, growth has really slowed down in the garden. If you didn’t plant winter veggies like broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower, it’s not too late, but just know they won’t grow much until spring hits.

Broad beans germinate best in winter, and their seed is easily planted straight into the ground. Don’t let them get leathery and grey. Pick them smaller, as sweet, young green things – they taste more like peas and can be eaten raw or lightly fried or steamed.

Broad beans don’t need good soil, but they will improve the soil for the next crop. Plant them where you plan to put tomatoes in spring, and they’ll not only add nitrogen into the soil but can be

cut down and used as straw mulch to protect the young tomato seedlings in October. As gardeners we are always thinking ahead about how we can improve soil for the next season of growing and it is vital that we become aware of the changing seasons.

Plant out: broad beans (seed), broccoli, cabbage, garlic, kale, lettuce, mesclun, pak choi, radishes, snow peas and strawberries.

Gardening tips thanks to Common Unity Project Aotearoa commonunityproject.org.nz



FOR KIDS, ABOUT KIDS

TREEHOUSE

This month, Matariki (Māori New Year) is on Friday 28 June – Rāmere 28 Hune

Celebrate by trying a game of mū tōre, a strategy game like noughts and crosses originating right here in Aotearoa.

HOW TO PLAY MŪ TŌRE

Objective: Trap the opponent's tokens so they can't move to win the game.

What you need:

2 players

8 tokens (perepere), 4 per player – you can use different coloured coins, stones or marbles

Instructions

Place the perepere in the starting position as shown.

The centre area is called the pūtahi.

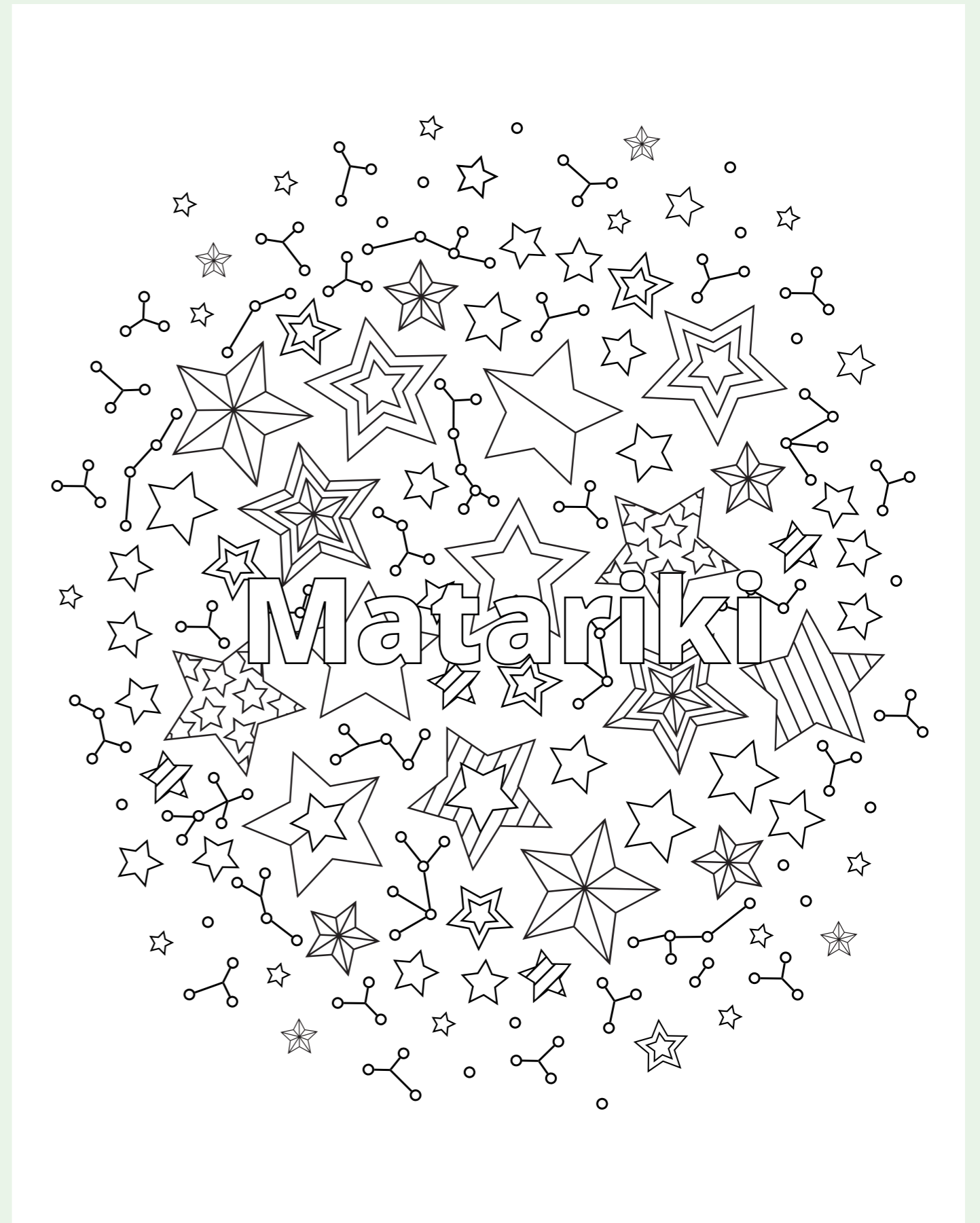
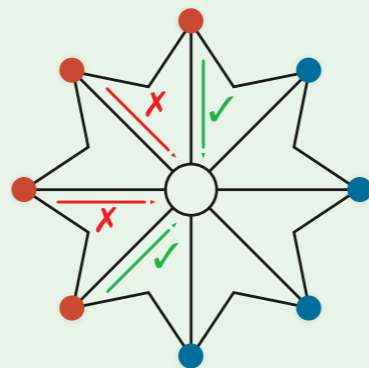
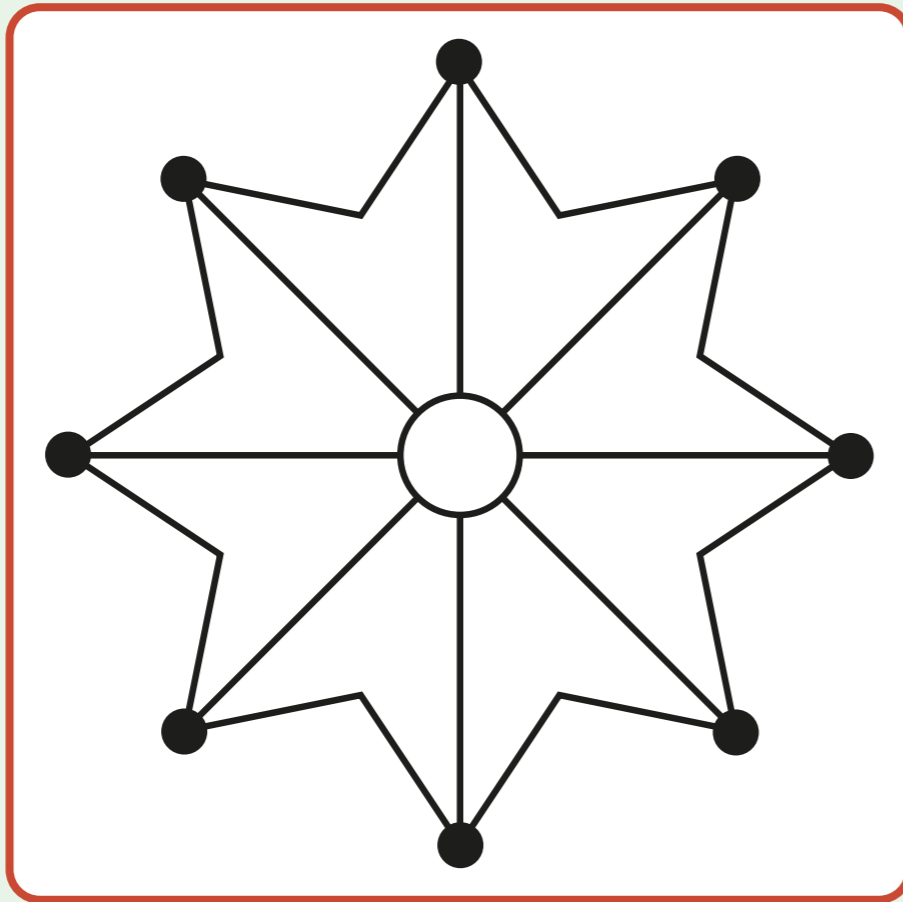
Decide who goes first.

Players alternate turns, moving perepere one at a time.

Perepere can be moved in one of three ways:

- from one point on the perimeter of the star to another neighbouring point. The points are called kawai.
- from the kawai into the pūtahi only if one or both of the adjacent kawai are occupied by the opponent's tokens
- from the pūtahi onto the kawai.

Legal opening moves are only from either of the player's two outer perepere to the pūtahi (not either of the two centre perepere to the pūtahi).





No data? No problem.

Zero.govt.nz has you covered.



Driveway safety reminder



Safekids Aotearoa suggests three things you can do to make driveways and other places safer for children:

- **Check** for children before driving off
- **Supervise** children around vehicles – always
- **Separate** play areas from driveways.

Email option If you would prefer to receive this publication via email, send your email address to editor@close2home.co.nz



We care and are here to help

We care about you and your whānau and are here to help. If you need to have a chat to us, you can call our Customer Support Freephone on **0800 801 601**. You can also find some helpful resources on our website: kaingaora.govt.nz



MoneyTalks is a free service to help you manage your money

You can get free, non-judgemental budgeting and debt management support by visiting moneytalks.co.nz for information, resources and a chat.

You can email help@moneytalks.co.nz, call 0800 345 123, text 4029 or find a free financial mentor near you at moneytalks.co.nz/find-help-now



Get it done online with MyKāingaOra



- Check your rent balances and accounts, organise debt repayments, and download letters
- Keep your details up to date
- Access wellbeing services
- Book non-urgent maintenance and view progress
- View upcoming scheduled inspections and visits

- Add and update your consented parties
- Te Reo Māori, Samoan, Tongan, Hindi and Chinese (traditional and simplified) translations are now available
- You can now contact us via the message function once you log in to the portal
- Help centre for frequently asked questions

If you access MyKāingaOra using Spark, Skinny, One NZ, 2degrees, or Warehouse Mobile there are no data charges – whether you're on a monthly plan or pre-pay. Just ensure you have data turned on when you're accessing it. Visit my.kaingaora.govt.nz



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