



Joyful and triumphant: Whangarei Youth Network co-ordinator Briarley Yates, right, network members and council candidates celebrate the network's fourth birthday.

Youth network celebrates milestone

By DENISE PIPER

It may still be in its early days but a youth network has plenty to celebrate.

Whangarei Youth Network celebrated its fourth birthday last week.

The youth practitioners meet monthly and brainstorm on how to make a difference for young people, co-ordinator Briarley Yates says.

"Our vision is to inspire the youth sector to be the big difference for young people in Whangarei."

The network has come and gone in various forms over the last 20 years, she says, and has done quite a lot in its present form over the last four years.

Regular youth involvement has been the biggest achievement, she says.

"If we don't support youth practitioners youth work can be a very lonely profession. We constantly have people that turn up to our meetings and come to help out."

Youth Week each May has also been a focus.

Up to 800 young people

took part in Youth Week activities in Whangarei in 2008.

In 2009 the number grew to 2000 and this year 2500 young people took part in Whangarei – which was also the site for the national event launch.

The Whangarei Youth Network has four goals – to provide information, training for the youth sector, to promote and develop events, and co-ordinate the network.

Briarley says the network needs a fulltime paid co-ordinator.

"I think that's what it needs now – somebody who's got dedicated time to take it to the next step."

Briarley voluntarily fits in the role with her youth services work at Te Ora Hau.

"My bosses are great enough to let me co-ordinate but I would love for the position to be fulltime and paid."

In other areas like Wellington a co-ordinator is paid by the local council, she says.

But there is nothing stop-

ping local businesses or organisations funding the position.

Whangarei District Council candidates were invited to the birthday last week to learn about the network.

It is passionate about the elections and wants to inspire the next council to think about the youth sector, she says.

Youth workers are invited to come to the network's next meeting, held on November 1 from 11am until noon at The Pulse in Raumanga.

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