

Hamilton West plans a day without cars

A Hamilton West School-wide carless day event is planned to highlight safety concerns at children being driven to and from school.

A city council facilitator has been working with Hamilton West School staff and pupils to help overcome congestion and safety concerns outside the school, where around 80 per cent of kids arrive and leave each day by car.

Students plan to challenge adults' thinking by demonstrating that they have learned safety rules, can be responsible on the footpaths, roadways and buses, and take greater ownership for getting themselves to and from school.

Hamilton City Council, Waikato Regional Council and police traffic safety personnel all have an interest in getting children safely to and from school but without clogging the city's roads with cars.

In an effort to change the daily morning and afternoon traffic scenario, school students have planned car-free events on July 30 to promote their concerns and to learn about other ways of getting to and from school.

The school promotion includes transport options such as walking, biking, scooting, skating and busing and, for those staff and students who travel from further afield, encouragement to car pool. The activities are tailored to give children the abilities and confidence to get

to school using options matching their ages.

For the younger children an orientation/walking exercise has been organised to promote a safe journey.

Year 5-6 students will see 100 pupils and 20 adults involved in an "amazing bus race" which has been organised in conjunction with Waikato Regional Council. They'll be hopping on and off buses around the city.

Year 7-8 students' bike, skate and scooter competitions will run for two hours with the support of police.

A certificate ceremony for the student-led group will be conducted by Councillor Martin Gallagher. As a finale, Waikato Regional Council's road safety mascot Ruben the Bear will reinforce road safety messages for the younger students and the Funky Monkeys will perform for the older students.

July 30 was chosen to mark the anniversary of the 1979 introduction of the Muldoon Government's Carless Days scheme — one of several attempts to help the declining New Zealand economy after the oil shocks of the late 1970s.

Car owners had to nominate one day a week on which they would not use their cars and were given a sticker to attach to the windscreen.

It also marked the country's attempt to introduce widespread car-pooling.

Be friendly to bees

August is Bee Aware Month and the National Beekeepers Association wants the Government to take threats to bees much more seriously.

Bees account for over \$5 billion of New Zealand's economy through honey exports and the pollination of crops.

But all wild bees have been wiped out by the varroa mite which is also threatening the rest of our bees.

"The varroa mite is one of the biggest threats facing our Kiwi bees. It has spread throughout the country and we desperately need to contain this pest," says NBA chief executive Daniel Paul.

Rototuna apiarists Martin and Stephanie Lynch are coping well and their list of achievements include top placings in National Beekeeper's Association awards. Sweetree Honey took out second overall in the honey competitions, was first in the Beekeepers Special Reserve Honey category, first place in the Dried Bee Pollen division and third in the Products of the Hive with a Propolis Tincture.

What started out as a lifestyle block hobby has become a full time business for the Lynch family. Through a long interest in bee keeping, which ran in Martin's family, keeping hives was a more attractive option than running stock.



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SWEET success: Rototuna award-winning honey makers Martin and Stephanie Lynch, of Sweetree Honey, will be doing their bit to promote Bee Aware Month. PHOTO: CLAUDIA AALDEERINK

Sweetree Honey hives are sited on the couple's River Rd property, in the Hakarimata Ranges, in the Marokopa Valley and in the Four Brothers Reserve, on the Raglan Rd.

To help protect kiwi bees Martin and Stephanie recommend that people garden organically. It is not just varroa mite which threatens bees but toxic garden sprays.

"If you struggle with organic gardening then look for bee-friendly sprays and use them at dusk when the bees are back in

their hives. Avoid neonicotinoids containing acetamiprid, imidacloprid, thiacloprid and thiamethoxam.

"Also avoid spraying when plants are in flower," they say.

The NBA is calling for donations to help fund research and find a solution to the varroa problem.

The NBA says other threats to New Zealand bees are pesticides a lack of nutrition for bees and potential honey imports.

"The government is considering allowing honey imports into New Zealand from various countries. But honeys from around the world can bring in a range of pests and diseases that would pose significant biosecurity risks for our bees."

"Kiwi bees need our help. In some countries bees are dying in huge

numbers. There are some concerns concerning bee deaths here in New Zealand, but so far things aren't as bad as they are overseas. We need to do all we can to help protect our bees and stop the situation getting worse."

The NBA urges New Zealanders to plant more bee-friendly plants and to use more bee-friendly sprays in their gardens. It also wants to undertake the first ever nationwide 'Bee Health' survey to find out what's really happening to our Kiwi bee populations.



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