



Fiji Day organising committee chair Ulamila Kura-i-Marie Vakalalabure-Wragg (left) along with Stella Keenan and Silina Qerea from the UC Fiji Student Association this week checked out the Foster Park venues and discuss their plans with Trent Burns from the Selwyn District Council events team (right). The University of Canterbury students have put their hands up to organise a variety of Kidz Club activities on Fiji Day.

Fijians Flyers take over Selwyn Sport facilities for the day

The Selwyn Sports Centre will be a sea of colours on October 12, as it hosts the inaugural Fiji Day celebrations for the Fijian diaspora in Te Waipounamu South Island.

The event is organised by an ad hoc working group made up of community leaders and representatives in the South Island, supported by Fiji's High Commission in Wellington and the Selwyn District Council.

Fiji's Minister for Education Hon. Aseri Radrodro will be the chief guest to support the Day's theme: Educate Fiji's diaspora today, for a better tomorrow!

The Fijian diaspora is multi-racial, with indigenous Fijians, Fiji Indians and Rotumans as the major ethnic groups.

The program comprises of two parts, the family-focused day event with sports, food stalls, kids' activities, academic stalls, health checks and Fijian Language Week oratory contests.

Over 50 teams will compete around Foster Park and Rolleston College in rugby, football, volleyball and netball, followed by a prizegiving in the evening.

Merese Rabitu from the Veilomani Selwyn Fijian Community, and member of the ad hoc working group says Fiji Day celebrations in Auckland and Wellington are major annual events, and there is hope that this Fiji Day celebration will be the beginning of an annual one for the South Island.

Rabitu says that hosting the day has only been possible thanks to the support of the Selwyn District Council and their events team.

“The council team has been bending over backwards to help us in so many ways, so we are extremely grateful for their support.”

Rabitu explains that the athletes will take the spotlight, but that education will be a major focus of the day.

“Many young Fijians go to work straight after high school, but we want to show them and their families that there are many other options in tertiary education to increase their career opportunities.”

Several education providers, including the University of Canterbury, Lincoln University and the Ara Polytechnic will set up information booths in the Selwyn Sports Centre to share their courses with the Fijian community.

“Some families never really consider tertiary education as an option, and once the young people get a taste of earning money, it is hard to get them to go back to school.”

Rabitu says that the Fiji Day will also be attended by Pegasus Health officials to provide health information and offer vaccinations to families that may be reluctant to visit a GP.

“For some it is the cost, but some families also prefer to use traditional herbal remedies from home. We just want to offer them mainstream health options as well when they visit the Fiji Day.”

The organisers want to invite the Selwyn community to come along and watch some amazing Fijian athletes show their stuff and enjoy the many Fijian foods on offer around the Selwyn Sports Centre.

Denise Kidd from the Selwyn District Council says that hosting events like the Fiji Day sports event is the result of the council’s strategy to target more community and high-performance events.

“We want to host teams and communities from all over New Zealand to showcase our district and our great facilities and reap the economic benefits of those events,” says Kidd, Executive Director for Community Services and Facilities at the Council.

“We particularly enjoy finding opportunities to celebrate our increasingly diverse community and the richness these communities bring to the district.”

Rabitu says the Fijian community in the Selwyn District has grown rapidly.

“Five years ago, we only had five or six families at our Fiji Day celebrations, and now there must be over a 100. We also have been overwhelmed by the number of teams entering, so we will have over 1000 people competing and thousands more coming along to support them.”

Contact:

Selwyn District Council Media

027 273 7911

media@selwyn.govt.nz



