

# Tala Lelei

## Health Promoting Churches' Newsletter



Associate Minister of Pacific Affairs Luamanuvao Winnie Laban with Health Promoting Church Ministers and Heart Foundation staff at the Tala Lelei Forum.

### Health Promoting Churches Earn Ministerial Approval

The success of Pacific Islands Heartbeat's Health Promoting Churches programme in transforming communities through positive behavioural change was celebrated at the Tala Lelei forum last December.

Pacific Islands Heartbeat (PIHB) is the Pacific-focused health promotion arm of The National Heart Foundation of New Zealand. In attendance at the event was guest of honour, the Associate Minister of Pacific Island Affairs, Hon. Luamanuvao Winnie Laban, as well as other friends and supporters of the programme, including Barbara Lusk (Ministry of Health), Aseta Redican (Auckland District Health Board), Lita Foliaki (Waitemata District Health Board) and Paula Lavulo (Tongan Health Society PHO).

The Minister acknowledged the superb work of the church communities and leaders in promoting the Heart Foundation's healthy lifestyle messages, and congratulated them on their leadership in taking up the challenge in the interest of improving Pacific health.

Nineteen representatives from participating Health Promoting Churches attended the forum, and several ministers made presentations outlining their congregations' progress in adopting heart healthy habits, which include changes in diet, exercise and smokefree promotion.

Parishioners and ministers from a number of churches have completed PIHB training courses in order to inform and support their communities in implementing and maintaining positive lifestyle choices.

Several have also completed the AUT

University Certificate in Pacific Nutrition course, gaining important skills in areas such as budgeting, menu planning, label reading and food preparation techniques. They have subsequently started education sessions back at their churches to pass on this knowledge and encourage better nutrition and eating choices.

Church members have also taken part in PIHB's smoking cessation training courses, confronting the high smoking rates in Pacific communities. The benefits of this training is evident through many parishioners already quitting smoking and receiving the appropriate support to stay smokefree, while many church halls and environs have been declared smokefree areas.

Pacific Health Manager, Lutita Rusk, says it is hugely encouraging to see the churches' progress.

"Health Promoting Churches are doing tremendous work in delivering the heart health message and guiding their congregations towards healthier lifestyle habits," she says.

"Churches play an important role in the lives of Pacific communities in New Zealand and are an ideal setting for addressing the rates of heart disease and diabetes among Pacific people."

There are now 25 Health Promoting Churches in Auckland and 5 in Wellington.

For more information about the programme or to enquire about your church getting involved, please contact Meliame Cocker, ph (09) 571 9191 ext 724, or email meliamec@nhf.org.nz.

### Editorial

During the past year, Health Promoting Churches have played an increasing role in delivering heart health information to the Pacific community. In addition to nutrition and physical activity programmes, many of these churches have embraced and supported the smokefree message.

Many Health Promoting Churches are taking the lead in addressing tobacco use in the Pacific community by making their church halls smokefree. Many church members have also joined health professionals on Pacific Islands Heartbeat's Smoking Cessation Training course in order to be able to offer support and advice to parishioners who are trying to quit smoking.

Smoking is a major cause of illness and death in the Pacific community. Ministry of Health research shows that 34 percent of Pacific women and 41 percent of Pacific men regularly smoke, quadrupling their risk of heart disease and stroke. Smoking is also a significant factor in other illnesses such as diabetes and lung cancer and smokers die, on average, fourteen years earlier than non-smokers.

The willingness of Health Promoting Churches to embrace the smokefree message is helping to encourage smokefree homes, cars and church environments. Looking ahead, it is important that we maintain efforts in promoting smokefree lifestyles. The rates of smoking among Pacific people are high in comparison to other communities, and need to be reduced for the benefit of our collective long-term health.

I congratulate the Health Promoting Churches on their commitment in improving the lives of the people in their communities and encourage them to keep up the good work.

Heber Fruean  
Smokefree Promotion  
Services Coordinator





## Positive Plans for Pacific Heart Health

More than forty people took advantage of free health checks and a healthy breakfast at Onehunga's Tongan Methodist Church when Pacific Islands Heartbeat, in collaboration with the Auckland District Health Board and ProCare Network Auckland PHO, launched the Auckland Pacific Community Pilot Project (APCPP) on Thursday, 29th March.

Staff from the Project's contributing organisations and other local health providers conducted the assessments and assisted on the day with support and advice.

Pacific people in New Zealand die from cardiovascular disease at rates second only to Māori and significantly higher than *palagi* New Zealanders. Pacific people have the highest death rate from stroke and also endure high levels of obesity and diabetes. APCPP Manager Feala Afoa says this project is designed to address these negative health statistics with a two-stage intervention.

"These intervention strategies are designed to encourage lifestyle and behavioural changes for the benefit of the Pacific community's collective health and wellbeing," says Feala.

"The first stage of the intervention screens people to assess their risk of cardiovascular disease, while the second stage involves a twelve-week healthy lifestyle programme to encourage good nutrition, regular physical activity and being smokefree in order to reduce risk.

"The church setting is ideal for these interventions as it provides a comfortable and culturally-appropriate setting, with more than 80 percent of Pacific people in New Zealand affiliated to a church community. The first screening session at Onehunga Tongan Methodist Church was a big success and we look forward to further pilot sessions in the months ahead."



## Onehunga Cooperating Parish

Reverend Fakaofu Kaio is practising what he preaches when it comes to healthy eating and healthy living.

His Onehunga Cooperating Parish joined the Health Promoting Churches programme last year. Since then, its 700 members have slowly but surely increased their levels of physical activity and become more aware of better nutrition choices. Reverend Kaio admits that lifestyle changes have made a positive difference to his own health.

"My choice of food is much better now because I'm more aware of healthier choices," he says.

"I still get the munchies in between meals and want to snack. But instead of the plates of heavy food that I would have previously chosen, I now eat fresh fruits and drink water. What a difference!"

Reverend Kaio and two members of his church's *Komiti* completed PIHB's Certificate in Pacific Nutrition course last year. They now share that nutrition knowledge

with their parishioners by running healthy eating and food preparation sessions at the church hall and displaying resources that reinforce those messages.

There are also weekly physical activity programmes at the church hall which include Pacific dancing, aerobics and walking. Reverend Kaio is pleased that some people who started coming to the activities solely for social purposes have ended up developing positive attitudes towards physical activity and good nutrition.

"It is our vision that this parish will gain general knowledge on nutrition, learn to live a healthy lifestyle and have active families," he says.

"We run our programmes in accordance with the Health Promoting Churches programme's Memorandum of Understanding and are committed to increasing education and understanding. Our parish members are learning to budget, cook for a big family at minimal cost, make healthy eating choices and maintain a healthy weight. The credit for this must go to PIHB and the Health Promoting Churches programme."

Reverend Fakaofu Kaio (left) at PIHB's Certificate in Pacific Nutrition training





## Tongan Methodist Church Ellerslie

Ellerslie's Tongan Methodist Church is dealing with obesity head on thanks to the support and advice of PIHB's Health Promoting Churches programme.

As part of a commitment to increasing its community's physical activity levels, the church purchased a screen projector for aerobic exercises and table tennis equipment for the youth. Many parishioners have spoken positively about getting into enjoyable regular exercise routines, and Health Komiti Secretary Luhaama Fisi'iahi believes that they are experiencing improvements in their health as a result.

"Some of the youths who come regularly to our exercise sessions on Monday and Wednesday evenings have started to lose weight and it is noticeable," she says.

"Obesity is still an issue, but we have found that it is important not to single out individuals when addressing this. Instead, we concentrate on creating activities that they feel comfortable participating in, and acknowledge their successes when they achieve them. We also hope to get the services of a Pacific Island activity instructor in the near future to further encourage our people to participate."

The battle against obesity received a further boost when three church members completed PIHB's Certificate in Pacific Nutrition course. They have since begun sharing this knowledge with the church community by running practical nutrition and food preparation activities for the rest of the parish.

## Health Promoting Churches Become Smokefree Churches

PIHB is committed to educating Pacific people on the hazards of smoking and the health benefits of quitting. Health Promoting Churches are playing a leading role in this process by promoting smokefree environments and supporting parishioners who are trying to quit the habit.

More than one hundred people from churches throughout Auckland, including several Health Promoting Churches, have participated in PIHB's Smokefree Workshops. These people have been able to use these skills and knowledge in promoting smokefree lifestyles to the church communities.

"We put a strong emphasis on what is culturally relevant and appropriate for Pacific

people, in order to maximise the effectiveness of the smoking cessation techniques," says Pacific Islands Heartbeat's Smoking Cessation Training Facilitator Anthony Leaupepe

"Culturally-appropriate techniques can greatly enhance connections with Pacific communities, allowing the person to intervene more effectively and offer the necessary support to help their fellow church members quit smoking and remain smokefree."

Progress reports show that 50 percent of participating Health Promoting Churches have declared their church halls smokefree and are working towards a total smokefree policy on their church properties.

## Health Promoting Churches Support Valentine's Heart Week



Several Health Promoting Churches supported the Heart Foundation's Valentine's Heart Week (12th – 18th February) by taking part in Wear Red for Heart Day on 14th February.

The early childhood group at the Free Church of Tonga in Glen Innes completed a series of art activities using the colour red to reflect heart health, while pre-school groups at PIC Owairaka and Tongan Methodist Glen Innes held heart talks and took part in fun physical activity.

Children at each centre wore red to celebrate Valentine's Heart Week.



## Weekly Community Events

### **Samoan Assembly of God (Mangere)**

**Volleyball**  
Saturday afternoon

### **PIC – Tokelauan Congregation**

**Aerobics**  
Monday and Thursday, 6-7.30pm

### **Tongan Methodist – Glen Innes**

**Physical Activity**  
Monday and Thursday, 6-7.30pm

### **PIC – Owairaka**

**Walking Group**  
Saturday, 7-8am

### **PIC – Ranui**

**Aerobics**  
Tuesday, 6pm  
**Walking Groups**  
Saturday, 7am

### **Onehunga Cooperating Parish**

**Physical Activity**  
Tuesday, 5-6pm  
(dancing, aerobics)

### **PIC – Glen Eden**

**Walking Groups**  
**Jazzercise**  
Tuesday and Thursday evenings

### **Tongan Methodist (Mt Eden)**

**Aerobics**  
Monday, 6-7pm and Saturday, 7-8am

### **Tongan Methodist (Ellerslie)**

**Exercise Group** – Church Hall  
Thursday and Saturday, 6-7pm

### **PIC – Tuvaluan**

**Walking Group**  
Saturday, 7-8am



## Solomon Poi

This recipe is from Pacific Islands Heartbeat's *Pacific Recipes for the Heart* cookbook. It can be served as a meal on its own, or as a side dish with meat dishes.

### Ingredients

1 kg kumara, peeled and grated  
1 kg pumpkin, peeled and grated  
6 large silverbeet leaves, stalks removed  
½ cup cashew nuts, roasted and finely chopped  
½ cup coconut cream  
½ cup low-fat milk  
pepper  
salt (optional)

(As a variation, the pumpkin can be replaced with 6-7 peeled and grated half-ripe bananas).

### Method

1. Combine all the ingredients and mix thoroughly
2. Line a baking dish with tinfoil, allowing enough to fold over the top
3. Place the mixture into the baking dish
4. Fold over the ends of the tinfoil to make a parcel
5. Bake at 180°C for one hour.

Serves 6-8

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 1 hour

Preheat oven to 180°C

## PIHB Resources

**Pacific Recipes for the Heart**  
(Cookbook)

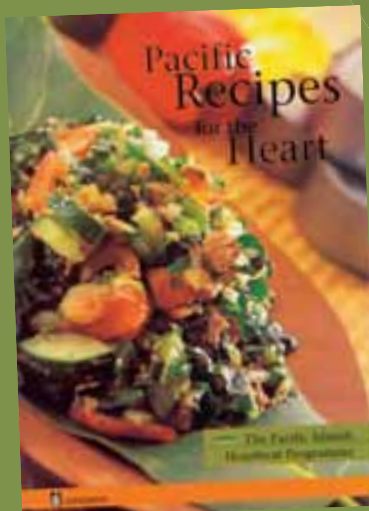
**Eat for Health**  
(Pamphlet in Samoan, Tongan,  
Niuean, Cook Islands, English)

**Eat for Health**  
(Posters)

**Freedom from Smoking**  
(Pamphlet in Samoan, Tongan,  
Niuean, English)

**Proud of my Pacific  
Islands Heritage**  
(Pamphlet in English)

**Me & My Baby**  
(Video on child nutrition)



The National Heart Foundation of New Zealand is the charity that leads the fight for heart health for all New Zealanders.

Pacific Islands Heartbeat (PIHB) is a health promotion initiative aimed at making a difference in the lives of Pacific people. PIHB's work focuses on the empowerment of Pacific people to make a difference at the personal, family and community levels, and on creating environments that are supportive of healthier lifestyle choices.

### PIHB Train the Trainer courses:

Certificate in Pacific Nutrition, Smoking Cessation, Smokefree

### For enquiries or to order resources contact PIHB:

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[www.pacificheart.org.nz](http://www.pacificheart.org.nz)

[www.heartfoundation.org.nz](http://www.heartfoundation.org.nz)