

For immediate release

15 May 2008

BLUES FESTIVAL TO HIT TOWN

Rotorua will be swinging to the sounds of the Blues when the weeklong National Blues Festival hits town from Saturday 31 May until 7 June.

The 'Blues Week' festival will run across six venues in the Rotorua Central Business District and ends with a double-bill concert at the Sound Shell featuring the Billy TK Junior band (complete with backing band from the United States) and the very popular band, Kokomo, from Tauranga. Sally Garner, Bay of Plenty Blues vice president and festival co-organiser, said Blues Week coincides with the 2008 Targa Rally and kicks off with a 'Street Party' in Tutanekai Street outside Café Triple One Five. The festival is just one of the events run by the Bay of Plenty Blues Club, which began two years ago and calls the Belgian Bar in Arawa Street its 'clubrooms'.

Monthly club nights are held in the format of a Blues Jam and members and guests perform on stage, usually to a packed house. "This has become so popular we've had to limit musicians to three songs or 20 minutes and put jam rules in place to ensure it runs in an orderly manner," she said. "Have A Go' days are also run by the club to give new or inexperienced musicians the opportunity to play in front of an audience or get a feel for live performance and to help make the transition to our regular jam nights. "We encourage musicians of all ages and our 'stable' of experienced musicians is on hand to support."

Aside from the jam nights, special guest concerts are run and the club has also hosted many international acts. One of them, American Blues legend Doug MacLeod, has been adopted as patron. "Income from our events has been used to purchase equipment and we now have our own PA, keyboard, amps, speakers, and microphones, drum kit and guitars." More information about the Bay of Plenty Blues Club and the Blues Week festival will be published in local newspapers prior to the event, and will be available from participating venues, and on the club's website www.blues.co.nz/bop-blues

Rotorua secondary school students will get the opportunity to see indigenous international theatre through a festival being produced by the Open Book Charitable Trust.

Amanda Hereaka, Open Book Trust secretary, said during the festival there will be six free performances for local secondary schools. "There are three plays showing by indigenous peoples from Australia and Canada as well as a Maori theatre company." She said students will also be able to attend workshops and master classes in theatre. "Open Book seeks to create opportunities for people to gain participation in, and experience of, theatre."

“The plays will provide a very international theatre opportunity for theatre-goers,” she said.

The public are welcome to attend performances of the three plays, which will take place at the Sound Shell from 16 -19 June. The plays will help raise funds for the local Challenge Violence Trust and RAVE (Rotorua Arts Village Experience).

A new playground is being put in place at Tuporo Tuhikiterangi Kohanga Reo with the support of funding from the Rotorua Trust.

Kelly Kinita, Kohanga Reo chairperson, said the new modern playground will replace the 10-year-old wooden one currently being used at the centre. “It will be of great benefit to the children, teaching them motor and social skills and will be a lot of fun for them also.” The new playground will include swings, a sandpit and a climbing area as well as a sun-shelter. The centre caters for 25 children and has been operating for about 12 years.

The 17 community groups to receive funding from the Rotorua Trust in its latest donations round were:

Bay of Plenty Blues Club Festival	\$15,000
Churches Education Commission Religious Education in Schools	\$10,000
Dutch Community Trust Wind Sculpture	\$10,000
Energy Options Healthy Homes Project	\$75,000
Gifted Children’s Advancement Trust Rotorua Programme	\$31,200
Life Education Trust Promotional Evening	\$4,000
ME / CFS Charitable Trust Awareness Week Evening	\$2,250
New Zealand Council for Blind Sailing World Blind Sailing Championships	\$30,000
Open Book Charitable Trust Honouring Theatre	\$7,500
Opus Chamber Orchestra Two Concerts	\$5,000
Rotorua Boys’ High School School Production	\$5,000
Rotorua Girls’ High School Role Model Students Scheme	\$1,000

Rotorua Lakes High School Role Model Students Scheme	\$1,000
Stage Challenge 2008 Event	\$3,500
St Faith's Church New Organ	\$15,000
Support Staff National Caucus National Conference	\$1,500
Tuporo Tuhikiterangi Kohanga Reo Playground	\$7,500

Ends

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