

Kids' health rewarded

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Young and Healthy: From left, Charlie Hill, Keira Almog, Leah Johnston, Kim Harvey, Benji McGirr, Sophie Clouston and Gwyn Baldwin celebrating their efforts in the Young and Healthy Virtual Adventure

By CASS MARRETT

A national, month long, digital initiative to promote healthy habits in schools came to a close at Queenstown Primary School on Tuesday.

The 'Zespri Young and Healthy Virtual Adventure' is the brainchild of Queenstown wellness entrepreneur, Kim Harvey, who designed it after realising how hard some adults find it to make small changes that would impact their health positively.

She figured if she could teach children to look after their health, there would be less need for an "ambulance at the bottom of the cliff" later in life.



The virtual adventure's reached about 100,000 children in New Zealand since launching five years ago.

Students earn points for real-world "healthy habits" like drinking water, eating extra fruit and veges, reducing screen time, getting a good sleep and exercising.

Once they've reached a certain number of points they can unlock virtual trips around the world accompanied by celebrity athletes, Ardie Savea, Amelie Aranne

Ekenasio, Kane Williamson and Samantha Charlton.

"The kids, even if they don't know what sport [the athletes] play, they look up to them, and the messaging that they give is probably taken on board a little bit more seriously than it is from, you know, me or their parents or teachers," Harvey says.

This year, six classes from Queenstown Primary School took part, and on Tuesday one student from each class was recognised for going "above and beyond" in the programme.

A key addition to the platform this year was making mindfulness a points earner.

"We were noticing this rise in anxiety, not just about Covid, but just generally there seems to be an elevation in anxiety in younger people."

Nationwide data will now be collated to understand the full impact — last year, students decreased screen time by 71%, 37% increased their fruit and veg intake, and 66% increased their water intake.

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