

## Youth unemployment a priority

The national headlines that the youth unemployment rate is at its highest since records began is a warning shot for Kapiti in particular, which is already short of employment across the board; says the Kapiti Coast Chamber of Commerce.

“The ongoing social consequences to our community of large numbers of young people having no positive work experience are not good to say the least” comments Chamber Chairman Mark Ternent.

The Chamber has been participating in the Kapiti Zero Youth Unemployment Project, along with youth training groups, Nature Coast Enterprise, WINZ and Council staff. While progress is being made and will continue, getting results in the short term has been slow partly because of the recession, but also because there is strong demand in Kapiti for the few jobs available. The recent opening of Mitre 10 Mega was an example; there were 2,000 applications for 70 positions. Mr Ternent adds “there’s some good progress being made behind the scenes, but it’s going to continue to be difficult to tackle youth employment successfully while there is a shortage of general employment in Kapiti.”

The Chamber wants Kapiti to have a clearer vision of its economic future, and better conditions to encourage local employment; and is prepared to work towards that.

The Chamber applauds the work being done by youth agencies to prepare young people for employment and also acknowledges that many young people today are truly excellent. “But there’s also a substantial number of school leavers who lack a work ethic and are virtually unemployable - as a community we need to ask why this is” says Mr Ternent.

The Chamber of Commerce is calling on employers to consider areas where they could use entry level employees and to talk with youth training providers and WINZ about the help available. “Our WINZ staff are showing that they have a real passion for getting local youth into both jobs and work experience, and we recommend you give them a call and find out how they can help – an extra pair of hands could be just what some businesses need right now” Mr Ternent finishes.

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