



**Media Release
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High school students transforming youth perceptions of smoking

Budding young artist Danika Hurman is the winner of a competition aimed at keeping her peers smokefree.

Danika, a Year 10 pupil at Waitakere College, has seen the detrimental effects of smoking in her own family.

So she was quick to put pen to paper when entries in the competition opened. The competition was supported by Waitemata District Health Board and Healthy Families Waitakere who want to prevent the rise of youth smoking rates.

"It wasn't very hard to come up with the drawing concept," Danika says. "I sort of just got straight into it. I already knew what I wanted to do because I've been thinking about this for a long time.

"I have relatives who've had problems with smoking and I understand what it means. I do not believe smoking is at all a good thing and I want more people to think the same."

The competition is designed to encourage youngsters to stop smoking or, better still, to never start. The average age of New Zealanders who start smoking is around 14-15 years.

The concept was first trialled by Waitemata DHB's Smoking Cessation team at Rodney College in 2016 when pupils were challenged to develop anti-smoking messages using digital technology as well as more conventional art mediums.

"This project is all about getting our youth talking with each other in a way that is meaningful, effective and ultimately designed to keep them away from cigarettes," Waitemata DHB Smoking Cessation team member Tracy Walters says.

Students from the Waitakere College Pasifika Medical Science Academy formed a Smoke-Free Movement Committee with support from Medical Sciences Director Jane Coup to design and develop their own version of the competition where they led the promotion, chose the judging panel and the prizes.

"This competition was a fantastic way, not only for our Pasifika Medical Science Academy to make an authentic change within our school but also for our wider-

school community to have a voice on a health issue that affects many of our families,” Jane says.

Entries included a variety of sketches, memes, raps, dance routines and drama skits - all designed to keep kids smokefree.

The competition also enables student leadership and action around health and wellbeing issues to drive a positive change in the school and wider community.

Massey High School students are also being supported by Waitemata DHB and Healthy Families Waitakere on a similar exercise.

Healthy Families Waitakere Manager Kerry Allan says “The students are leading the way in being innovative to communicate a by youth, for youth smokefree message. They are great change agents helping to transform youth perceptions on smoking as part of the Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 movement”

- Healthy Families New Zealand is a national initiative, and is part of the Government’s wider approach to helping New Zealanders live healthy, active lives. Healthy Families Waitakere is one of 10 communities across New Zealand involved and is being led by Sport Waitakere.

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Caption 1: Danika Hurman is the winner of a competition aimed at keeping young people smoke free.

Caption 2: Is this what you really wanted? The winning entry by Danika Hurman.

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