

'Centenary' celebration by and for volunteers

A 100th birthday of a kind was celebrated in Rarotonga recently by the Global Volunteers organisation.

The milestone was honoured and acknowledged earlier this month at a celebratory kaikai. About 100 people joined in the evening at Takitumu School to celebrate the fact that over 100 teams (actually 102) of volunteers have been to the country over the last 10 years.

Country manager Debi Futter-Puati says the night was a brilliant success with the organisation's community partners all sharing interesting stories on how Global Volunteers has supported their organizations in differing ways over such a long time.

Futter-Puati says they heard stories from painting the whole of the Tupapa medical clinic to teaching reading in schools and helping eradicate the crown of thorns or taramea starfish. "Stories were told of doctors, dentists, psychiatrists, teachers, physiotherapists, mental health workers, speech language therapists, painters, plumbers, electricians, builders, journalists, magicians, students, children, elderly and librarians. You name it people with those skills have probably been to help with one project or another," she says.

Photos were displayed on a screen reminding those present of the different teams who have contributed their time, energy, wisdom and service to the Cook Islands. "The Global Volunteers goals of waging peace and promoting justice in the world were certainly met with the fun way Cook Islanders, Americans and Canadians all enjoyed each other's company and celebrated the friendships made during the time that Global Volunteers has had the honour of supporting so many different partners in the Cook Islands," says Futter-Puati.

The current team of 18 volunteers was entertained with dancing from the Takitumu School cultural group, parents supplying a string band and singing during the enormous kaikai. Global Volunteers wishes to thank all of the community partners who made the evening such a wonderful night. "Without you it would not have been possible. We look forward to continuing our work together in the future," says Futter-Puati.

Special appreciation goes to Takitumu School and PTA for hosting the event, the Virtues Project for their big-hearted donation, and the Ministry of Health for its generous support for the kaikai. The community partners at the kaikai were Takitumu School teachers, pupils and PTA, Te Kainga Mental Health, Cook Islands National Council of Women, the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation, Immanuel Aketemia School, Tereora College Learning Support Unit, Cook Islands Red Cross, Ministry of Health, Disability Action Team, the Virtues Project, Cook Islands Library and Museum Society, Takitumu Conservation Area, St Joseph's School, Whale Research Centre and Apii Te Uki Ou.



Members of the current Global Volunteers tuck in to a great spread put on by community partners to celebrate over 100 teams to the Cook Islands.