



Sunny outcome for foundation

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The drought has murdered thousands of sunflowers destined to raise funds for Make-A-Wish but it's also brought a silver lining.

Barely a few hundred of the 90,000 Gulf Harbour sunflowers were exchanged for donations before the drought either stunted their growth or wiped them out, despite watering.

But that hasn't stopped the Make-A-Wish Field of Dreams Summer Festival being a success, even before it ends on March 24.

A text donation concept was quickly introduced instead and more than \$22,000 was donated in just one morning after the sunflower saga screened on TV.

Project manager David Thomas is delighted with the result and says the festival continues to be well supported and people are encouraged to text DREAM to 5338 to donate \$3.

The festival symbol, fabric sunflowers in two sizes are offered for a donation starting at this weekend's festival events and some real ones are still available.

The sunny weather has also brought thousands of people to the events.

About 2000 people were at a fishing contest at Hobbs Wharf on Sunday, and a record 400 attended the outdoor Saturday night movie at Fairway Bay. Dragon boat racing the previous weekend also attracted about 2000 spectators.

Movies continue tonight from 8pm through to Sunday, and again next week, with entry a \$5 donation.

A Coastguard Northern Region display, featuring smoke flare and lifejacket demonstrations, is sure to bring crowds back this Sunday, along with continuing Sunday market days, all from 10am. The day also offers a chance to get in a Coastguard training boat obstacle course drive.

The final big weekend sees some of the region's best bands, like Tantrum and duo Danielle and Ainslie Davies, Creme Brulee and Craig McTavish perform on March 24 from 10am to 2pm. Visitors are invited to bring picnic rugs, friends, family and dancing shoes.

The festival is one of the most ambitious fundraising programmes undertaken by Make-A-Wish New Zealand, its chief executive officer Carolyn MacDonell says.

"It has the potential to raise more money and fulfil more wishes than many other activities the organisation has undertaken."

Funds help grant wishes to sick Kiwi children.

Go to makeawish.org.nz, fairwaybay.co.nz and hobbswharf.com for more information.

Suburban Newspapers, publisher of the Rodney Times, is supporting Make-A-Wish New Zealand.

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