



K.S.P.S. XPRESS



EXCITED: Kindergarten students Georgia Boote and Alex Hollitt get ready for the fete.
— Picture by Sami Lander

Fete to be fantastic fund-raiser

By **CHELSEA TODD** and **LUKE BENSON**

DO you remember the taste of fairy floss? Do you remember the fun of the jumping castle? If so, come along to the Kotara South PS.

The school's parents and citizens are holding a fete to raise money for the school and all are welcome. It will be the school's first fete in eight years.

"There is much excitement," said president of the P and C and fete co-ordinator, Brett Price.

"The P and C have been working hard to make sure the fete will be an exciting experience, not just for people associated with the school but for the entire community," he said.

Megamania will organise the rides and there will be a bungee trampoline, jumping castle, ball pool, flying chairs and giant dragster slide.

This is in addition to a barbecue and stalls with cakes and confectionery, plants, lucky dips, showbags, ten pin bowling, pass the footy and more.

Passes to the Knights' 2008 season will also be given away.

The cost of all rides will be \$3, except for the bungee trampoline, which will be \$6. Children can buy a \$15 wrist band that entitles them to unlimited \$3 rides or a \$20 wrist band that also includes a turn on the bungee trampoline.

The fete will be held between 3pm and 7pm on Friday, November 2 at the Kotara South PS quadrangle and field.

Eye on the environment

By **ELISE TODD** and **GEORGIA WOODING**

WITH its proximity to Blackbutt Reserve and other bushland, Kotara South PS has always been a haven for wild-life.

The large eucalypts, native shrubs and open spaces in the school attract a variety of bird species including spur-winged plovers, ibises, crows, magpies, rosellas, wood pigeons, willy wagtails, galahs, cockatoos, kookaburras and many others.

The school also attracts some mammals such as ring-tailed possums, brush-tailed possums and fruit bats.

Kotara South has always, where possible, looked after native wildlife and this year has had to ring the environmental group WIRES twice to collect abandoned rosella chicks.

Year 6 recently planted some native grasses and shrubs to attract birds and there has already been an increase in the number of birds in the school grounds.

This year the school bought some compost bins for food scraps from fruit break, lunch and recess.

When the compost bins are

full and the food scraps have broken down, the compost is put on the school's gardens.

One big step the school is taking to help the natural environment is the placement of possum boxes in the school's big eucalypt trees.

The boxes are an artificial home that wild animals and birds can live and breed in if there aren't any available tree hollows.

Since the June storms there are fewer hollow trees as many have fallen over.

The boxes will be placed roughly 6 metres off the ground and will hopefully attract species like sulphur-crested and Major Mitchell cockatoos and brush- and ring-tailed possums.

The school parliament's environment minister, Connor McKinley, said that year 6 was putting boxes around the school because more buildings in Kotara meant less trees for wildlife to live in.

More homes for possums meant that they had less chance of getting hit by cars or attacked by dogs and cats, he said.

Connor believes that the boxes, which are painted in aboriginal designs, will be a success.



THINKING GREEN: Year 6 students Luke Benson, Matthew Foot, Tiffany Salter and Eliza Beed position a possum box.
— Picture by Sebastian Webster



TIME OUT: Winona Wilson, Sami Lander, Sebastian Webster and Jacob Parkinson relax after a game.

Brand new basketball court at school

By **ELISE TODD** and **GEORGIA WOODING**

THE wait is finally over and Kotara South PS has a brand-new basketball court.

The new court was desperately needed as the old court was dangerous and discouraged children's play.

"The basketball court was not very good because it was unsafe," said year 6 student Conor Riordan.

"It was very rough and had lumps all through it.

"It [the new court] has affected children's play by being smoother and everyone seems to play on it a lot more than when it was unsafe and bumpy."

The increased use of the basketball court has seen a variety of new games develop such as Pac-Man tips, red rover, netball and skipping.

The new surface has also been of huge benefit to the

school's daily fitness and sport programs, as well as being beneficial to organisations outside the school such as OOSH after school care.

Ebony McGuinness and Georgia Way are two year 3 students who are very happy with the new surface.

"The basketball court is now being used by everyone because there are netball and basketball lines and it is a lot easier to play on," Ebony said.



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Internet dangers are everyone's responsibility

Editorial

By RUBY TIEDMAN and LUKE BROUWER

IN THIS modern world where computer technology is becoming a big part of people's everyday lives, it is very easy for children to get lost in cyberspace.

This can leave them open to dangers that could cause harm to their computer, their parents' bank balances and their lives.

Kotara South principal Peter Scotchmer said there were a variety of things young people could get involved in on the internet that could put them in a dangerous or inappropriate situation.

Some of these included: getting incorrect information from websites; accidentally finding unsuitable sites, whether violent video games or sites with adult themes; and spending too much time on the internet, which could prevent children from getting enough exercise and making friends.

Another problem was children buying things online with parents' credit cards. This could make parents angry and give internet thieves valuable information.

Another threat was viruses that were attached to emails.

One of the biggest dangers children faced on the internet were chat rooms, Mr Scotchmer said.

In a chat room anyone could talk to anyone else and could obtain a

dangerous amount of information.

By getting someone's personal details they could stalk and even harm them.

Mr Scotchmer said there were many tricks chat room predators used to get information. One was to pretend they were the same age as the person they were chatting to. This generated trust between the child and the predator.

This trick has been used in many countries around the world, including Australia, and has resulted in kidnappings and deaths.

There are ways children can protect themselves from these dangers, Mr Scotchmer said.

Children should never give out personal information, no matter how much the person they were chatting to wanted it. They should never trust someone they had met in a chat room. And children should leave the conversation when someone they didn't know started to talk about their age, school, suburb or family.

Mr Scotchmer said that many internet dangers could be prevented by having more at home parent supervision of children's internet use, teaching students at school what was good and useful information, making sure all filtering software was up-to-date, and teachers monitoring students when using the internet.

The KSPS Xpress believes that if young people, parents and teachers are aware of internet dangers and the ways they can prevent them, cyberspace can be a fun and safe place to be.



DESTRUCTION: Blackbutt's head ranger Paul Metcalfe surveys damage to one of the bird aviaries.

Blackbutt weathers storm

By LUKE BROUWER

BLACKBUTT Reserve has always been a favourite destination for Kotara South residents due to its natural beauty and close proximity to the suburb.

During the June storms Blackbutt suffered an extraordinary amount of damage and is still in the process of recovery.

Some of the damage to the reserve included the destruction of large bird aviaries, which resulted in the disappearance of 30 birds, 15 of which have since been recovered; damage to animal enclosures, which led to the escape and recapture of 12 wallabies; and the destruction of countless trees.

Although the animals suffered minimal injury, it is expected that

the flora will take years to recover.

Paul Metcalfe, the head ranger at Blackbutt, said that the clean-up cost has been estimated at \$100,000 and the insurance bill for damage will come to \$400,000.

After the storm the park was closed for two weeks due to overhanging trees and flood water damage to walking tracks.

One area is still off limits due to dangerous bushwalking conditions.

The reserve did not take long to have its basic operations up and running again due to the hard-working staff and volunteers who worked long hours.

Due to the large number of trees lost, the park requested and received 2200 trees from Newcastle City Council.

The park is now open.

Developing balance in community

By LUKE BENSON

IN every community there needs to be an organisation that acts on the community's behalf in relation to concerns about development.

In Kotara, it is the Save Kotara Action Group, or SKAG.

This organisation was founded in 1996 when a company wanted to build a mega market where the Kotara Homemakers Centre is now based.

Since then the organisation has worked with council to make sure a number of projects fit in to the community.

The most recent example is the extension of the Westfield shopping centre. Members of the community were concerned that an increase in traffic at the centre would cause traffic jams, and they wanted to make sure that the roads were upgraded before the expansions opened.

SKAG, with the assistance of council and Westfield, ensured roadwork was finished before the centre's opening, and contributed to a decision that a third exit was unsuitable.

The president of SKAG, Caroline Everson, said the organisation was not against development but a safeguard to ensure it didn't go too far.

"You have a right to voice your concerns with your local council," Ms Everson said.

"Council needs to compromise with the community in regard to development."

Ben's green message proves a real winner

By LUKE BENSON and CHELSEA TODD

EARLY this year Ben Watson, a year 2 student at Kotara South PS, won a writing competition held by Clean Up Australia for a story he wrote about the environment.

The story, which talked about the natural environment and the animals in it, was considered the best in his age group and beat several other entries from students in the Newcastle/Lake Macquarie area.

Ben said that when he

found out he won the competition he was "very excited and happy".

To be presented with his prize Ben had to go to Charlestown Square with his mum and Kotara South school principal Peter Scotchmer.

Ben received a Rapid Saver account from Newcastle Permanent Building Society; an environment pack, which included native plants and a compost bin for the school; and a Domayne gift voucher, which was used to buy a computer screen.



WINNER: Ben Watson and his computer display screen. - Picture by Winona Wilson



- Illustration by Conor Riordan

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