

Press Release

474 words

Stepping out against child sexual exploitation

On 15th November, Otago University students, Kate Medicott and Tim Geaney will take their first steps toward raising awareness of an issue that has touched their hearts.

Watching child psychotherapist, Serafin Dillon, being interviewed on Breakfast TV in August, Kate (a Social Work student) made an immediate decision to take action. Dillon talked about 13 young New Zealanders she had interviewed that had experienced prostitution in their youth, some as young as 12 years old, and the traumatic effects it has had on their lives. Her research had just been published by ECPAT Child Alert – an organisation addressing the sexual exploitation of New Zealand children through pornography, prostitution, trafficking and sex tourism.

Kate shared her feelings with boyfriend, Tim – a Physical Education student - and the two decided to devote their summer break to bringing much needed awareness to this issue. They step out from Bluff in November to walk 2,300km to the top of New Zealand, raising as much awareness as they can along the way.

“I just can’t bear the thought of innocent children having their lives robbed from them,” says Kate, a fun-loving young woman who is so full of life herself. “When I have children myself one day, I need to know they will be able to be nurtured by the same safe community I grew up in.” The duo is being supported throughout the country by relatives making it a real family affair.

Though not athletes, Kate and Tim have been training arduously and it is clear their passion alone will see them through the 82 day walk to have them arrive at Cape Reinga in February.

“The sexual exploitation of children is unfortunately far more prevalent within New Zealand than people would like to imagine,” says ECPAT Child Alert National Director, Alan Bell. “One million clicks were made on child pornography websites from New Zealand computers over a recent two year period. Last month, the first New Zealander was arrested for organising child sex tours to Thailand. This sort of crime cannot be allowed to continue – not to overseas children, not to your children, and not to mine.”

Thankfully, Bell explains, research has shown that the simple act of bringing attention to these issues, can help to reduce such crime. All profits raised from this fundraising campaign will be donated directly to ECPAT Child Alert to establish a national Youth Participation project. “As the youth of today become the leaders of the future,” says Bell, “they need to be informed and active so that community attitudes and behaviour contribute towards New Zealand being a country where children are valued and protected.”

To watch Kate and Tim’s progress throughout the country, to walk beside them as they arrive in your town, or to donate to this worthy cause, visit Kate’s blog at.... or the ECPAT Child Alert website, www.ecpat.org.nz.

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ECPAT Child Alert is part of a global network established 1990 and now in 70 countries around the world. It is a charitable trust registered with the Charities Commission. For further information on ECPAT Child Alert, visit www.ecpat.org.nz, or contact National Director, Alan Bell, ph (09) 376 5252, alan.bell@ecpat.org.nz.

