

Keen to lend a hand

by Kelly Deeks

John Key's State of the Nation speech in January urged New Zealand businesses to grab hold of their social responsibilities and help feed hungry children in lower decile schools.

Willingness from businesses is definitely out there, and it seems people just need to hear that someone wants to do something, and the hands start going up to help.

In his speech, Mr Key said some schools dip into their operational budgets to provide a few Vegemite sandwiches for those who miss out. "That is not good enough. I believe this is an area where government can work alongside the business community to find new and innovative solutions to a deepening social problem."

One business doing its bit for the past three years is ABE's® Real Bagels, which sends products to 13 decile 1 schools in Auckland. After reading a news story about kids turning up hungry to Southern Cross Campus, ABE's® Real Bagels directors Megan Sargent and Brent Milburn knew they could help.

Megan says the company takes returns from supermarkets of products that haven't sold, but are in perfect condition to be eaten. In the past, ABE's® Real Bagels sent these returns to the pig farm, but Megan and Brent realised they could fill a more pressing need in the community.

Rather than just send bagels out to schools, Megan and Brent wanted to make the whole process fun and educational for the kids, and was lucky enough to

be approached by the Life Centre Trust after publicising what they wanted to do.

The Life Centre Trust was already sourcing its own food to hand out to schools, and now, after meeting with Southern Cross Campus' PE department, has a "breakfast club" running a couple of times a week.

With ABE's® Real Bagels' input, the Diabetes Project Trust is also involved to teach the kids about nutrition. "We wanted to make it fun, teach them how to juggle and ride a unicycle," Megan says. "A company donated a unicycle and a juggling teacher contacted us and gave a free session in the gym. It seemed like it just had to be put out there and everyone said 'we'll help'. It just needed someone to instigate it."



ABE's® Real Bagels directors Megan Sargent and Brent Milburn.