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Bikes small in size, big on education

TALIA SHADWELL Last updated 08:30 13/10/2012

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Manfeild Park will soon host more than 200 whiz-kids zipping along its raceways at 70kmh with their knees about their ears.

This year's fifth annual Mini Moto Grand Prix will bring secondary school midget motorbike builders to Manawatu for a two-day event, starting on Tuesday.

The New Zealand Secondary Schools' mini motorcycle racing event will feature students aged 15 to 18 racing bikes they designed and built themselves.

But it's not all fun and games - the project will earn students NCEA credits, with each provided with a \$380 kit that includes wheels, an engine and brakes. Sponsors also supplied them with safety leathers.

Feilding High School engineering department head Roger Emmerson dreamed up the idea in 2008 when he worked Palmerston North Boys' High School. The debut race involved just 12 minibikes.

Manfeild Park chief executive Heather Verry said the event's popularity had exploded since then, when 100 students and five schools raced.

"This year's event is especially impressive - 224 motorcyclists and nine sidecar crews representing 19 schools, from as far north as Mercury Bay to as far south as Murchison," she said.

Mr Emmerson said the project not only produced an enviable toy, it also provided solid practical training for budding trades professionals.

"You make the bike and it's yours. They go the whole route from making the bike to riding [it] and then when they go to job interviews they show them that, and it's very impressive."

Mr Emmerson said his own pupils' effort was inspiring to behold.

"A lot of them put a lot of effort in, they really do. They're in here all times of the day and well into the evening."

He said many of his pupils had so enjoyed the work that they were preparing to enrol in engineering degrees.

Feilding High year 12 pupil Karel Beukes, 17, planned to apply for a place at Canterbury University to study mechanical engineering when he finished school at the end of next year.

He was interested in designing sidecars, and had revelled in showing his concepts to a visiting Formula One designer who had worked on bikes destined for the Isle of Man's world famous circuit.

"I learnt a lot from him. It's just amazing talking to someone and using new techniques for making forms," he said.

His engineering class learned to assemble a bike kitset, adding the engine, suspension, steering and body-kit using welding, lathe turning and drill press processes, with support from experienced teachers and learning resources from Competenz, under its Tools4Work programme.

Feilding High year 13 pupil Phil Baines, 17, was looking forward to racing for his second consecutive year.

Everything was built from scratch and each bike showed off its maker's individual tastes, he said.

"At the end of the day no bike around the workshop is the same. Every one of them around the workshop shows a personal design."

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Minibikes get students racing

By TOM BLEY

Somehow, college students are racing up the Manawatu Standard's Manfeild Park on October 13 with the minibikes they built.

The event is the result of a year-long project at Feilding High School, where students have designed and built their own minibikes. The project is a collaboration between the school's engineering department and the local business community.

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NOVICE ON-ROAD TRAINING FOR ADULTS	<p>PT ENGLAND: Sat 17 Oct 10am-12pm</p> <p>PT ENGLAND: Sat 17 Oct 12pm-2pm</p> <p>PT ENGLAND: Sat 17 Oct 10am-12pm</p> <p>PT ENGLAND: Sat 17 Oct 12pm-2pm</p>	<p>PT ENGLAND: Sat 17 Oct 10am-12pm</p> <p>PT ENGLAND: Sat 17 Oct 12pm-2pm</p> <p>PT ENGLAND: Sat 17 Oct 10am-12pm</p> <p>PT ENGLAND: Sat 17 Oct 12pm-2pm</p>
THE BASICS OF BIKE MAINTENANCE	<p>HENDERSON: Sat 17 Oct 10am-12pm</p> <p>MANUREWA: Sat 17 Oct 10am-12pm</p> <p>SUPERCITY: Sat 17 Oct 10am-12pm</p>	<p>HENDERSON: Sat 17 Oct 12pm-2pm</p> <p>MANUREWA: Sat 17 Oct 12pm-2pm</p> <p>SUPERCITY: Sat 17 Oct 12pm-2pm</p>

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