

“With love from Taupō...”

THE IDEA

In 2024, Taupō will host the VinFast IRONMAN 70.3 World Championships! The spirit of the event is captured in the word “Tuituia” - to be bound together in unity - which will guide top professional and age-group triathletes from over 117 countries pushing for the title of World Champion in their respective divisions. This bucket-list race will feature around 6,000 athletes and 3,000 volunteers.

In 2018, Taupō celebrated 20 years of being the official home of IRONMAN in New Zealand. 20 years of volunteering and cheering was marked with a new initiative called ‘With love from Taupō’, a highly successful concept that showcased just how supportive the local community is of the event and of individual IRONMAN athletes.

HOW IT WORKED

In 2018, we partnered with local schools in the Taupō region, requesting support from their teachers and principals, to encourage students to create hand-written letters / good luck messages of support and drawings which were placed in every single IRONMAN NZ and IRONMAN NZ 70.3 athlete race pack for them to read before competing. The letters were an absolute hit, with over 1,500 individual athletes receiving a letter from a school child in Taupō, providing much needed motivation for race day, and a local touch of support. Some athletes even visited schools on the Monday / Tuesday after the event to personally hunt down their letter writer and thank them for their kind words.

BIGGER AND BETTER IN 2024

We propose repeating the ‘With Love from Taupō’ initiative in 2024 - but encouraging schools to turn the initiative into a broader learning celebration for students and potentially incorporate into the school term’s curriculum. Again, the essential idea behind the letters is to send athletes a ‘good luck’ message for their race. ‘With love from Taupō’ presents an opportunity to integrate a number of learning and creative ideas such as:

- Incorporating school values into the message(s) shared with athletes
- Informal and formal letter writing skills
- Local pride /community knowledge (i.e. telling athletes more about the Taupō region/ NZ)
- Encouraging students to create ‘itineraries’ for what athletes should do in the Taupō district
- Creating Koha / art to be gifted to athletes along with the letter i.e. a friendship bracelet
- On course support / dress up challenge
- Sports + Support: encourage kids to sign up for the Kids Fun Run and come down on race day to support their athlete
- Any other ideas that teachers / schools would like to tie into the initiative.

The letters will be generic (not addressed to individual athlete names) for ease of logistics.

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2024 TARGETS:

- We are expecting 6,000+ IRONMAN 70.3 World Championships athletes this year, therefore we would like to set a goal of receiving 1500 individually written letters.
- **We require all letters to be completed and ready for collection by the 22 November. They will then be packed into the athletes’ bags for the VinFast IRONMAN 70.3 World Championships on the 14 - 15 December 2024.**

NEXT STEPS

1. School’s Association representative to identify all schools who would like to participate in the initiative & numbers of letters from each school.
2. Representative to confirm ‘The School Champion’ - one key point of contact for each participating school.
3. IRONMAN to arrange athlete / media visits at a couple of the schools to promote the program.
4. Taupō District Council to distribute blank letters & envelopes to all schools.
5. Teachers to review / screen the letters before students submit them.
6. All letters to be completed by the 20 November. If completed earlier by your school, please let us know. Contact sashton@taupo.govt.nz or thoward@taupo.govt.nz who will arrange collection.
7. School Champions to bundle up all completed letters and place in an envelope with the name of the school on the front and have ready at reception by the 22 November for IRONMAN / Taupō District Council to come and collect.
8. IRONMAN will then place all letters in the athlete race packs from 29 November.
9. Schools to encourage kids to come down on event weekend to support the athletes.
10. Schools to encourage kids to get involved and participate in the IRONMAN New Zealand Kids Fun Run! Keep an eye out for the registration link to come!

Date: _____

School: _____

Room Number: _____

Dear Athlete:

My favourite place in Taupō to go is: _____

From (first name): _____