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Media Release

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The nationwide fundraiser has seen more than 6000 children from about 150 early childhood groups put their best foot forward to raise funds so that Barnardos can help children thrive through its child and family services.

"It was a fabulous turnout," says Julie Van Herel, the Christchurch-based Coordinator of this year's event. "Over the month, youngsters from Invercargill to Whangarei have taken part in sponsored walks and obstacle courses to raise funds for Barnardos. In many areas they were joined by local sports heroes and celebrities, as well as Sports and Recreation New Zealand officials for warm ups as well as the toddle."

"The feedback from the toddling groups has been really positive. Children and organisers have had fun and exercise, with great support from families, friends and their local communities."

This is the second year Barnardos has held its Big Toddle, based on the successful Big Toddles held by both Barnardos UK and Barnardos Ireland. A unique feature of all the Barnardos Big Toddles, is that individual Toddle organisers can retain 25 per cent of funds raised for their own group, with the rest going to Barnardos.

Money raised will enable Barnardos professional and experienced staff to continue working with children and families in communities throughout New Zealand.

"Our aim is to see all children loved and cared for, which also means providing families with the support and guidance they need. We do this through services such as Family Support, an individually tailored social work support service which helps families identify and make changes which will improve the wellbeing of their children; parent education classes; the Child Contact Service, which enables children to have safe and significant contact with non-custodial parents; and counselling programmes for children affected by domestic violence," says Julie.

"We have been really touched by the numbers of young children's groups and their local communities keen to help us achieve this aim."

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