

## University News



### Dancing mathematicians off to Kaiapoi

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Kaiapoi, get ready for a hoedown – mathematics-style!

Mathematical entertainers from the University of Canterbury are heading there this Monday night with their dancing shoes on for a free family barn dance.

The entertainers will be led by senior Mathematics and Statistics lecturer, Dr Bill Baritompa, who received \$22,000 from the Royal Society of New Zealand Science and Technology Promotion Fund to make his "Dance of Mathematics" project a reality.

The Kaiapoi barn dance will be the first in a series of maths dances he plans to run in rural Canterbury towns in the coming months.

"Barn dancing is extremely mathematical, though most people don't realise it. The patterns of the dance – 'Join up hands and circle left; take four steps in and four steps back' - are geometric, symmetric, repetitive cyclic movements. These ideas are the stuff of mathematics!"

The community barn dances are primarily a social event but they will carry an educational bonus.

Dr Baritompa believes that people are often put off, not by the mathematics itself, but by their experiences of being taught in a boring and complex manner.

"If something comes across as too heavily mathematical it will put people off. We plan to offer these communities something fun and not make a big deal about the mathematics. We will give the message that maths relates to everyday life experience, rather than an isolated activity involving only mathematicians."

The dance will run from 6.30pm to 9.30pm on Monday 4 April in the Kaiapoi High School Hall.

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