

# Burns survivors build confidence at Camp Awhi

## ZIZI SPARKS

Starting a new school can be nerve-racking and Jack Dragicevich usually has more to worry about. But thanks to a camp for burns survivors, the 11-year-old will start intermediate feeling confident.

When Jack was 2, he climbed up some cupboard shelves to investigate a beeping microwave and ended up pulling a bowl of boiling water onto himself.

He spent seven weeks in hospital and has scars down his chest and stomach as a result of the third degree burns on 11 per cent of his body.

Now 11, he was one of 21 children who attended Camp Awhi, a camp for children between 7 and 17 who have suffered a severe burn at some point in their lives.

This is the third time Jack has attended the camp and the Birkenhead resident says it's the camaraderie that keeps him coming back as well as the confidence he gets from the camp, which ran from January 25 till 29.

"We learn don't put yourself down, and just keep on going through life and be positive," Jack

**"Why don't you come along and join our family?"**

Jack Dragicevich

says.

The Burns Support Group Charitable Trust organises the camp. Jack's dad, Paul, is the president of the trust and says having the camp close to the start of the school year is "invaluable".

"A lot of the kids are starting new schools and it's a really anxious time of year," Paul says. "It helps them start school on a positive note."

He says the biggest challenge the organisation faces is getting people to join.

"There are thousands of kids that have suffered burns. We've got 21 here this year."

It is free to go to Camp Awhi and the organisation works all year to pay for every child who wants to attend. This year, the kids have come from as far as Kaitaia and Bluff to the camp at Lucas Heights, Albany.

Paul says by the end of the camp, the children are insepar-



Jack Dragicevich, 11, poured boiling water on himself at the age of 2.

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able and they continue to communicate all year round. This year the children attended a SkyCity Breakers training session.

"He'll run around shirtless, he'll go swimming with classmates, he doesn't care less," Paul says. "That's what we're trying to get for all these children."

To the kids who've been burned and aren't at camp, Jack has a message, "Why don't you come along and join our family".

To donate see burns.co.nz.