



Happiness is lots of space: Celebrating their move to larger premises this week are members of Wanaka's Kahu Youth group, (from left) Rob Harper (17), Aaron Blackledge (18), youth worker Angie Griffiths, Saasha Bruce (18) and youth worker Richard Elvey. *PHOTO: CRIS JOHNSTON*

Youth group finally gets the space it needs

By CRIS JOHNSTON

THE days of cramped quarters and shared toilets are over for Wanaka's Kahu Youth group, following a shift to bigger premises last weekend.

The move into the former Wanaka Physiotherapy building in Russell St was the third change of venue for the group since it was formed in 2003.

Two years ago it relocated from a town centre single room to "The Crib", located beneath the Cinema Paradiso, but increased participation in youth programmes and a shortage of office and storage space meant conditions were still cramped.

"This will be the first time we will have our own toilet and not have to share with neighbouring businesses. There's also plenty of room to store food and equipment and provide a range of different spaces for the kids," youth worker Richard Elvey said on Tuesday.

The new building provided plenty of space, not only for a games and

computer room but but also for older teenagers, who wanted to "just hang out, have a quiet, peaceful space, study or do homework," he said.

About 120 young people aged 10 to 20 now use the youth group facilities during the school term and at weekends, when drop-in sessions are held.

"We have touched lots of different areas of youth in Wanaka and while you are never going to please everyone, it has become 'cool' to just hang out here," co-youth worker Angie Griffiths said.

The group is running a school holiday programme each Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, from noon to 4pm and drop-in sessions on Friday and Saturday from 3pm to 10pm.

Other plans included establishing an education room and running regular movie sessions, Mr Elvey said.