

Big Buddy Community News

What's coming up

Upcoming **Induction/Training Evenings** for prospective Big Buddies are *16 June* at Big Buddy, 40 Strid Rd, Te Atatu South & *17 June*, Barnados House, 85 Ghuznee St, Wellington.

Next Big Buddy **Mentor Meeting** dates are *Wednesday 2 June*, 7.15pm at Grey Lynn Community Centre and *Thursday 3 June* for a 7pm start at *Barnados House*, 85 Ghuznee St, Wellington.

Who's new

In this issue we **welcome** the following new Big Buddies to the programme:

Andy Gore
Chris Fox
Craig Major
Dale Arnborg
Ed Morrell
Greg Taylor
Lloyd Albiston
Mark Cameron
Michael Hughes
Mike Bell
Morgan Webster
Paul van der Meer
Rod Powell
Ropeti Taito
Ty Kahu
William Ormerod
Peter Gribble

Funding Update

Since our last newsletter, we have received a large donation from a generous individual who does not want to be named and The Tindall Foundation for which we are very grateful. Don Cotter of Office Products Direct (Avondale) continues his wonderful support by supplying all our stationery needs – cheers Don.

Special thanks again to those who **donate via automatic monthly payment**. This is a terrific way to provide us with a regular known income which helps us a lot. If more of you would like to donate this way, please see over the page or our web site for details.

Our very grateful thanks to all of you for your support.

Tony

Mark and Joshua - A match spanning 11 years

I recently had the bittersweet experience of sending my Little Buddy Joshua, now aged 22, off to the UK for his OE. Bitter because my family and I will miss his sunny smile and cheerful personality, sweet because it is so exciting to see him heading off into the big wide world and to imagine all the cool things he will do and see.

I first heard about the Big Buddy program in 1998 after taking part in an Essentially Men weekend. I was feeling overwhelmed by my lack of power in the face of what seemed to be a rising tide of social dislocation, disharmony and violence which somehow always seemed to come back to the behaviour of men, particularly young men. I decided that the only way to really effect change was to try to help one person at a time, because that was surely in my power.

So began my relationship with Joshua Goodwin. He was around 10 when we met, had never known his Dad but had a loving, wise Mother who knew that Josh needed a male role model in his life. I am pleased to say that my wife Carolyn supported my efforts and she too soon came to love Josh as our close family friend.

It's hard to know what activities to do with a Little Buddy at first. We soon figured out that Josh did not share my obsessions with planes and soccer, but was polite enough to come along when asked. We did share a love of the beach, and of music. I taught Josh to drive, took him to his first big concert (Blink 182), bought him his first guitar and watched him develop into a punk rock guitarist and a really solid citizen who held down a full time job while practising and gigging with his band - Come Undone.

Joshua has taught me to admire tattoos and piercings (which I could not previously find it in me to do), to accept that academic success really does not mean all that much if you have good friends, and to text. Carolyn and I have joked that Josh was our "rent-a-kid" upon whom we could practise while our own kids grew up, but of course this was the tip of the iceberg. Josh has been at all our birthday parties and Christmases since we knew him, and often has a key to our house.

It has not all been roses, we watched Josh undergo some heartache to do with girlfriends, and watch him learn from a brush with the law which saw me attending a courtroom for the first time. However with the help of his friends and family Josh has continued to grow into a fine young man. He needed a push to go through the departure gate on the way to his OE but is now working in the UK and loving it, keeping everyone informed of his adventures through his Facebook page.

Josh says from England; "it's been a wonderful experience having a male figure I can turn to for guidance and help through my teenage years and to help me get over to the UK for new experiences".

All in all the Big Buddy experience has given me more than I ever expected when I first signed up. It is more than Big Buddy now, Josh and I are mates and that will last a lifetime. I can't wait to hear about his adventures, and to watch his career and relationships as they unfold.

Mark Robson (Big Buddy of 11 years)

Buddies get to Top Gear Live!

My Big Buddy Brian and I went to Top Gear Live and it was an amazing experience. There were cars on fire and big explosions in 'Carmageddon'. The presenters, Jeremy Clarkson, James May and Greg Murphy had designed and built a new form of transport made from their backyard tools. Jeremy designed a hovercraft which had no brakes, James designed something made from weed eaters and Greg had made a sun lounger with six chainsaws for the motor. There was also car soccer, NZ vs England. Then the presenters split the crowd into two teams and we played a game where you had to scream to make your teams car go faster and hold up your card to turn the car, red for left and green for right. All of the Big and Little Buddies sat together in a group. We all enjoyed the show very much and would like to say a big thank you to Brett MacLeod who provided the free tickets.

Liam - (Little Buddy, 11 years old)



Joshua and Mark before Josh's big OE!

Editorial

Autumn comes in all its glory to slake the thirst of a bone dry earth after a long rainless summer. What a summer it's been! Well not great if you're a farmer and a challenge for us gardeners, but all those hot summer evenings were something else.

We have been busy exploring new ways to communicate to the world. We now have a Face Book page. Joining the social networking space has been interesting and while we are resisting the call of Twitter we thought to at least dip our toes in the digital ocean a little more and see what comes of it. I have already learnt my first lesson – check your spelling and grammar! It's so easy to tear off a comment to Face Book without checking.

You can find us on Face Book by searching for 'BigBuddy'. We will be there with pictures, videos, regular stories and mini moments of joy. We have also stretched out into blogging - I have my own blog – www.richardaston.co.nz and the Big Buddy blog can be found from our web site, at the bottom of the home page along with the Face Book link.

Back in an 'old school' medium, we are trying out the wireless with radio ads running on all the major stations in Wellington and a couple of stations in Auckland. Our ads are kind of quirky and are getting a lot of interest. They were created by Sarah Waters from the 'The Pond' creative group and recorded by Ben Sinclair of 'Images and Sounds'. They did it all pro-bono and we are grateful for their generous support. Sarah entered the ads in the Radio Ad Awards for April so here's hoping.

We will also be doing some work on our web site to allow us to keep it fresh and add video etc to it. The updated site is not live yet but hopefully by June it will be – so watch out for it.

On another front, I am developing a business idea that has the potential to create an alternative income stream for Big Buddy. It's based on our well honed skills in screening men. We are looking to offer a professional screening service to the likes of CYFs, Schools, Early Childhood Centers etc to help ease their fears about employing men to care for young children. Its early days yet but with financial help from our friends at the Tindall Foundation we are doing a feasibility study to fully scope it out. I will update you in our next newsletter.

Thinking about funding, I'd like to acknowledge the work done for us by Jude Gillies, our funding person. Tony is still doing funding work but the job has got much bigger so Jude has been working part time to help out. She has a long history in not-for-profits, is very skilled and works at a sometimes frantic pace. I like working with Jude and she likes working with us.

While all this goes on we are of course still meeting lots of good men wanting to volunteer their time as mentors and many wonderful boys and their mums and caregivers who approach us for help. That's the great thing about my job, one minute I'm being interviewed for the NZ Herald or working on business ideas, the next I get a call like this one - from a young woman who told me that before her two younger stepbrothers had Big Buddies, life for her was a nightmare. They were really difficult boys to live with and there was lots of tension in the family. With the Big Buddies now on the scene, it's all changed. Family life is much happier and peaceful. I could hear she was close to tears when she said, "for what you have done for my brothers and my family I want to thank Big Buddy from the bottom of my heart". Now that's a great way to start Autumn!

Go well friend, Richard

Big Buddy Talks the Walk

Fellow Coordinators Steve, Scott, Martin and myself have been busy out in the community to 'talk the walk', giving presentations to organizations and community groups on the simple heart message of young fellas needing good men in their lives. It has been exciting, engaging and just quietly, a little scary. The response has been fantastic.

It's great to feel some momentum as the fog of the recession lifts skyward. We're a durable bunch here at Big Buddy and while 'expansion' is a word that drifts lightly on the horizon 'consolidation' has bought enhanced clarity and focus into our work. We pride ourselves in being part of the community. Finding creative ways of being able to reach out and connect with people is an important part of what we do.

In doing public speaking I am reminded of my huge admiration for the mothers and caregivers who notice their boy is missing a good man in his life and put their trust in us to match him. As one 7 year old Little Buddy recently said to me, "It's awesome, cool, nice, very very nice".

Stephen Bell - South & West Auckland Coordinator

Big Buddy Summer Day Out

This was our biggest turnout to a Big Buddy event ever! 85 Big and Little Buddy's, volunteers and staff gathered at Long Bay Reserve, to what has been typical of this summer, a beautiful sunny day.

There had been a recent storm in the Pacific which made the jetski rides truly thrilling as our drivers negotiated big dumpy waves coming in quick succession. There was the odd gear breakage to show for it, however this didn't deter the boys who continued lining up all afternoon for a chance to ride these 'mean machines'.

We've had some 8 events over the years and again I watched as guys stepped forward to help prepare the lunch without much direction or fuss. I'm really impressed how this group of men and boys mucked in, and soon enough we were tucking into a feast, with the only leftovers being a dozen sausages that a Big Buddy happily took home to his grateful mutts!



Buddies Simon and Dylan enjoying the day

Special thanks again go to our sponsors of the sausages, the Aussie Butcher Group in Henderson. Also thanks to Bronco at Spit Roasted Feasts and Carlton Party Hire, Henderson for the BBQ hire and of course Mal and his team for providing the great jetski rides.

It was good to see everyone again; relationships developing, boys growing and our community ever expanding - good stuff!

Steve Sobota - East & Central Auckland Coordinator

How to donate to Big Buddy

Donations to support the work of Big Buddy are much needed and very welcome.

Ways to donate to us:

- See our website, www.bigbuddy.org.nz to donate online with a credit card.
- Download an automatic payment form from our website & become a Big Buddy monthly donor supporter.
- Simply send us a cheque, (write your name and address on the back so we can send a receipt).
- Make a donation direct into our bank account: 12-3039-0172153-02 (Please put your name in the reference box and email us your address details so we can send a receipt).

All donations go towards the work of screening, matching and supporting Big Buddy relationships and expanding our outreach to the many fatherless boys in the community.