

Issue 14, Winter 2008

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Big Buddy Community News

What's coming up

The next **Induction/Training Evenings** for prospective Big Buddies will be *Tuesday 26th August* at Big Buddy, 40 Strid Rd, Te Atatu South and *Wednesday 3rd September* at Thistle Hall, Cuba Street, Wellington.

Next Big Buddy **'Monthly Meet'** dates, Mondays, *8 September* and *6 October*, 7pm at Grey Lynn Community Centre, 510 Richmond Rd Grey Lynn.

Who's new

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

Casey Burns
Brett Lake
Hans Ottow
Shaun Walters
Mike Woods
Damian Peterson

Big Buddy Winter Day Out

Its happening....our upcoming *Big Buddy Winter Day Out* is on the horizon and we're heading to the hot pools!

For Big Buddies who and want to bring along your Little Buddy, we'll have an invite with all the details in the post next week. We have delayed the date this year to hopefully get some warmer and finer weather, but with mother nature as she is, who knows what we'll get on the day! For your dairies its happening, **Sunday 28th September**, 12-4pm at Aquatic Park - Parakai Hot Springs. Hope we see you there!!

Who do you know

If you know of a good man out there who would make a fitting Big Buddy, now's the time to tap him on the shoulder. Person to person is always the best way to promote what we do. **If you have somewhere for displaying Big Buddy material please call us for brochures, display stands and promotional material.*

What's happening in Wellington

For a few years we've been hearing people say, "Please open an office in Wellington!" What an, ahem, Capital idea, we said. And so it came to pass. We found the funding, then found a good man to run things, then found an office and now we find ourselves all systems go!

Scott, our man in Wellington, takes up the story:

Greetings from the navel of the nation. And what a vibrant place it is. We may have the occasional day of challenging weather down here (it keeps the air pristine) and a few too many politicians being slippery (they'll find out which way the wind blows soon!) but the men of the capital have shown their true



Scott with new signage at the Wellington office

colours and stepped forward in good numbers. In just a few weeks of advertising, nearly twenty potential Big Buddies have put their hands up to be the world of difference to a fatherless boy. Some of these men are now in the thick of the screening process and will potentially be ready to be matched to a waiting Little Buddy very soon.

It was always going to be a bit of challenge to make our presence known here on a limited budget but

we've had outstanding support from the locals who seem more than happy to help us spread the word. We've also had great support from the local media who have announced our arrival and informed readers about what we do - so much so that we're yet to advertise with the main player in town, The Dominion Post!

It's been a real joy to meet the boys and Mums who are eagerly awaiting a Big Buddy to come into their lives, and we're expecting our first match to be happening very soon. After that they're likely to come thick and fast so I'd better sign off and get back to work! One last thing, if you have friends or family in Wellington who you think would be great Big Buddies or a boy who fits the criteria to become a Little Buddy, tell them to get in touch with me on scott@bigbuddy.org.nz or (04) 384 4888.

My Big Buddy Brent!

Little Buddy Andrew (9) recently sent us a wonderful description of his experience with Big Buddy mentor Brent. It was hand written in lovely coloured pen with boxes and circles and symbols. Here's a summary of what he said:

Best time: Every time!

Worst time: When we found out we had no car to go out.

Recommended places to go: Model World, Muriwai Beach, Circus Quirkus, garage sales, big book sales.

Things I want to do: Build Mechanno, carve little woodmen, learn how to chop wood.

Places I want to go: The pirate wave pools, Waitakere ranges, a basketball game, a rugby match.

What I think could be improved: More meetings of Big and Little Buddies to get to know everyone otherwise everything else seems perfect.



Little Buddy Andrew with Big Buddy Brent

Editorial

It seems winter is leaving us and frankly not before long. I don't know about you but I have not enjoyed these last few weeks of winter at all, all that endless rain! A few weeks ago I stood out in my sodden vegetable garden and thought "I'll just give into it and turn it into a rice paddy". Still - we all survived and I have heard rumours spring is waiting in the wings ready to swoop in with budding flowers, sunshine and, um, less rain we hope.

Our work at Big Buddy continues to thrive, you will read in this newsletter reports from our Rodney and Wellington offices – we are getting very positive responses to our advertising and promotion work with many fine men stepping up to join our community of mentors.

On a less positive note I am not happy with the poor level of funding support we are receiving from Government. You may remember last newsletter I was waiting on confirmation from CYF's on our funding contract, we have a funding contract now which is good but it covers less than 5% of our budget. This is despite the ministry confirming Big Buddy as an essential community service. I don't blame the individuals involved; I have been working with some fine people in CYF's etc over the past two years and it seems although they personally support our work, the system they work within does not. The machinery of government that handles funding for social service is very difficult to understand. I am not sure if it's a matter of finding the right box for us to fit in or perhaps there is no box for us at all, but we're just not getting the support I think we deserve. I don't want to appear churlish - we are of course grateful for all the financial support we receive no matter how much, but I think Big Buddy is now a well recognised social service formed by a community of fine men - of ordinary heroes - stepping up to the mark and giving their time. It's about time the government stepped up - with the resources we need to keep this much needed service growing. I do not want anymore than 50% of our budget from government sources so I don't believe I am asking for too much. I have not given up by any means and am working hard to navigate my way through the machinery of government, hopefully getting the reliable support for Big Buddy to keep us growing and sustainable. There - that's my wintry grumble over.

In recent months I've been reaching out into the area of fathering, still connected to our core work - for I believe what we do is a form of fathering. I was invited to give a lecture at Massey University recently as part of their Chancellors series. My talk was titled, "Mentoring in the field of fathering", exploring the idea that fathering is more than fathers; it's a field of uniquely male caring that all men share and is clearly illustrated by mentoring. When I turned up to Massey to give my talk it was a stormy flood strewn day so the turn out was less than usual but the talk was very well received and of course it got the word out about Big Buddy, who we are and why we are here. I have also been working with the Families Commission, Barnardos and Parents Centre, facilitating two fathering forums in Wellington and Auckland. The unique conversational style of these events yielded some great insights and grassroots knowledge around the state of fathering in New Zealand, its social importance, the need for it in the lives of our children and what we might do to make more of it possible.

I also had the opportunity to meet with principal youth court judge Andrew Becroft, at a recent hui for the Vodafone 'World of Difference' winners. His presentation to us around youth offending was very enlightening. He identified 83% of youth offenders are male and fatherlessness was a significant factor in their backgrounds. He saw mentoring as a core solution to help steer these unfathered boys away from a life of crime. It was not a magic bullet by any means but in his opinion it could make a significant contribution. I spent some time talking with him after the hui, I liked him. He is not afraid to speak out and he was very supportive our work and is writing us a letter of support.

Aside from my frustrations with government funding I am still warmed by the continuing affirmations for our work coming from many people, from the new men applying to become mentors, from those like Andrew Becroft and of course the many fine men in the Big Buddy community and stories from the caregivers and boys who we serve. Bring on spring and the promise of new growth.

Go well friend, Richard.

North Auckland-Rodney

This from Martin:

I noticed that the turning of the key in the door and the disarming of the alarm has a feeling of familiarity these days, the only change to this new routine is whether I have been in a hurry to go from the carpark to avoid the rain, or if it was a leisurely stroll in the early morning winter sun – I think we all know it has been more of the former.

It has been 3 months since we opened the North Shore-Rodney office and all systems are up and running. I have painted the walls of the office which has made it feel more like like our place.

Usually Induction/Training evenings for Big Buddies are held at Te Atatu head office, but recently we held one in the meeting room here at Takapuna. It was warm enough on a cold winter's night and of the 11 men present, 9 were from the North Shore - Rodney district, a sign that we are increasing our presence in the area as we had planned. Quite a few people have visited and know where I spend the majority of my days and we've now have a sign up outside showing the way in. So if you are in the area, come in and say hello.

Funding Update

Since our last newsletter we have received a number of donations from the public - as generous as always. In particular we now have a couple of regular contributors who donate on-line by auto payment direct from their bank account each month. What a wonderful idea - thank you.

We have also received a very generous grant from the Todd Foundation – many thanks. This has guaranteed the continuation of our Wellington office operation from its start up a few months back.

We are now into our new financial year and have already been busy chasing grants from several funders.

We are confident this funding year will be as good, or better, than the last. Our heartfelt thanks go to all those who helped during the last 12 months and - in anticipation – to those funders who will support us into the future.