



PRESS RELEASE

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Chiefs' training session makes memories for fatherless boys

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When boys' mentoring charity Big Buddy talks about finding positive male role models for fatherless 7 to 14-year-olds, they're not asking for saints or sports stars to put their hands up.

Although, anyone watching some of the Gallagher Chief's best-known rugby players and five 'Little Buddies' at a training session last week would be convinced otherwise.

Thanks to a very thoughtful benefactor, 5 pairs of Hamilton Big and Little Buddies got to spend almost three hours in the company of famous sportsmen.

The group, including Big Buddy area coordinator Andrew McFadden, were shown round the team's facilities and treated to lunch. They then spent an hour on the field with Damian McKenzie, Stephen Donald, Liam Messam and Anton Lienert-Brown.

McFadden says watching the players give their undivided attention to the boys while they conducted a mock-training session was truly inspiring.

"At one point, Liam Messam ran alongside one of the boys to encourage him, and when he really began to struggle, Damian McKenzie simply sat down on the grass with him and talked. It was great to see the smiles on these boys' faces. Their Big Buddies had a great time too. It certainly was a memorable day."

International test-playing Gallagher Chiefs players might be a little thin on the ground, but McFadden says kindness and the ability to dedicate some time and attention to a boy each

week are qualities that *many* decent men possess – it's just that more men in Hamilton need to know there are boys waiting for their lives to be bettered in this way.

The local dad of three says is simply an awareness building exercise and the growth after only a few months of operation in Hamilton is very encouraging.

“Big Buddy launched in the Waikato a year ago, and we were matching boys with mentors by Christmas. I'm so encouraged by the response from Hamilton communities, but currently interest from mums and carers in finding a Big Buddy for their boys has outstripped our stock of available mentors!”

Wellington communities are going through [the same shortage](#), as outlined by the Dominion Post this week. Hamilton currently has 8 boys matched with mentors, is screening 5 Big Buddies, but has 6 Little Buddies not-so-patiently waiting.

McFadden asks men who hear about Big Buddy and want to know more to simply pick up the phone and ask, visit <https://www.bigbuddy.org.nz>, or check out <https://www.facebook.com/BigbuddyNZ/> and leave a message.

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EDITORS NOTES:

- Since 1997 Big Buddy has created over 700 matches. At 2017 capacity, Big Buddy can create 80 new matches per year. Additional funding through donations and sponsorship is directly focused on increasing these match numbers.
- The first funding for the Big Buddy programme in 1997 came from the Crime Prevention office of the Prime Minister.
- Big Buddy's work is proven to steer young men away from crime. People working at the coal face of crime will attest to the fact that this prevention needs to start early.
- Our statistics show that for every 100 boys we help, 2 of them would otherwise have taken the route leading to a serious criminal action. The NZ Treasury estimates the cost of crime is \$3 million per criminal. Mentoring one boy costs \$8000 in total. By saving 2 boys, Big Buddy potentially saves the country \$5, 992, 000.
- Contact Big Buddy CEO Richard Aston Ph: 027 271 2223 / 09 838 4448

Please contact Sally Webster for more information or interview and image requests.

Big Buddy

MENTORING FATHERLESS BOYS

Sally Webster

Media & Communications Coordination

sally@bigbuddy.org.nz

www.bigbuddy.org.nz

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sallywebster
WRITER



Editorial | Communications | Public Relations
+64 21 599 191 | sallywebster@xtra.co.nz