



From teaching men's anger management to finding mentors for boys

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While finding kind-hearted male mentors to improve the lives of boys whose fathers are not



around is a beautifully simple proposition, staffing and operating such a charity in Auckland, Wellington and Waikato requires a great deal of thought and coordination. South and East Auckland is no exception – areas that collectively require at least 30 good men to step up to mentor boys right now.

Not surprisingly, the team at [Big Buddy](#) was thrilled to hear they'd been granted \$30,000 by the SKYCITY Auckland Community Trust towards salaries for South and East Auckland. The funds will see men's health veteran and South & East Auckland Coordinator Nic Heywood continue recruiting,

screening and matching potential Big Buddies.

With a respected background working across men's mental, physical and social health, positive male role modelling is an area that Heywood is very familiar with.

Ironically, it was just as the seeds of Big Buddy were forming over 20 years ago that Nic heard about the organisation. As well as working in the primary health sector, Nic was involved in facilitating and developing post-correctional anger management programmes. Leaders in these fields were convinced they should find some way to prevent prisons from being overpopulated with men who had grown up without any kind of positive father figure.

"In bringing boys more resilience and confidence through mentoring, they are far more likely to deal positively with the kinds of events or situations that can act as precursors to a troubled life. Boys who haven't had a positive, dependable role model are more likely to take the wrong fork in the road when faced with these things."

In terms of when and how the magic of mentoring happens, Nic says it's simply the trusted, regular time spent with a Big Buddy that is so important. In adulthood, we might view this as that sense of value we get from someone who we can stop in and have a cup of tea with, someone that we know will listen to us.

"Little Buddies know that they can, should they choose to, do this with someone they relate to...a bigger version of themselves."

In Big Buddy terms, 'fatherless' means boys whose fathers have passed away or whose father has been officially absent from their lives for at least two years. In the 14 years since Big Buddy became a registered charity, it has helped over 800 boys develop confidence and

resilience through positive male role modelling; the organisation aspires to serve more than 8000 boys who qualify as fatherless in New Zealand today.

CEO Paul Burns says being able to guarantee Heywood's role in these Auckland regions through Sky City's generosity also takes a significant weight off operational costs throughout the North Island. This is especially pertinent at a time when Big Buddy is planning to expand into the South Island in 2019.

"We've got 6 fulltime staff and 5 part-time staff, as well as specialists that do a wonderful job of growing this organisation. We're considered to hold the gold standard in screening potential mentors to take up the role of a Big Buddy, and this 100% successful approach to safeguarding children's wellbeing does not come cheap. So we're very grateful to business trusts that can support us in upholding this quality of care."

Heywood sees the spectrum of men's work he's been part of as pivotal points on a journey towards helping boys – he is now part of the fence at the top of the cliff, rather than the ambulance at the bottom.

"Coming full circle to work at the preventative end of men's journeys by helping fatherless boys is so enjoyable for me now."

He says that any South or East Auckland man with a sound character and a kind heart who could spare even just 2-3 hours a week for at least one year, should visit Big Buddy's website or phone 09 828 1358 and apply to become a mentor today.

EDITORS NOTES:

Big Buddy was first funded by the Crime Prevention Office in 1997 - the majority of men in the criminal justice system did not have a relationship with their fathers.

- It costs roughly \$8,000 to match a fatherless boy with a compatible male role model. The mentor screening process is rigorous, includes psychological assessment and takes 2 months to complete.
- Big Buddy has matched almost 50 Auckland boys with mentors in the last August 2017 to July 2018 year. Nearly 400 matches are operational in the North Island.

Please contact Sally Webster for more information

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