

2014 CANON MEDIA AWARDS COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR



Adrean Gedge with her boys, from left: DJ, Marcus, Jeffery and Carlos.

Big Buddy helps boys

ADREAN GEDGE is the

Classic super-mum.

The single mother with five children, aged between 8 and 16, still manages to work and study as a pharmacist at Auckland University.

Money is tight, so every now and then the 35-yearold sets up market stalls just so they can have a family

But the only thing she felt was missing in their lives in Birkdale was strong male role models for her four boys Marcus, 8, Jeffery, Carlos, 13, and DJ, 14.

So she signed them up to Buddy, a scheme hing adult male matching adult male volunteers with boys whose fathers are no longer in the picture.

"I used to go to rugby games and shout out my sup-

Mum says strong male roles important

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The Big Buddy mentoring service needs more male role

Mentors must be able to dedicate at least two to three hours a week with their little buddies and will undertake a

Go to bigbuddy.org.nz to donate, put your name forward or put a suitable person's name forward

port. They would look at me like, what do you know about rugby?"

All four boys are now each connected with a "perfectly matched" buddy, Gedge says.

DJ loves Lego and build-ing things, and his buddy Philip is a mechanic. He has Asperger's syndrome and this is why she signed up to begin with, but she has noticed a big change in him

lately. "His buddy doesn't see it because DJ is a differ-ent person around him – he's

happy.
"He's a big brother more

Carlos is "quiet but very sporty", much like buddy Riaan, who came on his three-day school tramp, and Jeffery's buddy Gavin is at every league and softball game he has.

"Marcus on the other hand is a chatterbox and inde-

His buddy Vern knew that, so he has created a bucket list that includes climbing Rangitoto Island. attending a Kiwis game and a U20 Soccer World Cup game and snorkelling in Leigh.

Vern has been Marcus buddy since February 2014, and says he is "such a good little fella"

"One day I read an article on Willie Apiata, who is the ambassador for Big Buddy, and thought yeah that's something I'd like to do," says the retired 68-year-old.

one of four brothers.
"We throw a ball or go to

Like Marcus, Vern is also

the beach. We went to the Volvo yachts and did the Mil-

ford to Takapuna walk.' He recommends He recommends Big Buddy but says not everyone will be the right candidate.

ing kids grow and be the best they can be, then it's some-

thing you'll enjoy.
"But it's a thorough selec tion process.

"You have interviews, must provide references and

see a psychologist."

Gedge hopes the buddies will be long term because of the positive changes she has noticed in her boys.

"When they need that little bit of support, the buddies are there. "I think that's what a child

needs," she says.

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