

The WaterBoy builds strong communities



Today the gap between the haves and have nots is growing in New Zealand. Thomas Nabbs, Founder of The WaterBoy sees the benefits that sports brings, as an opportunity to build stronger communities and make New Zealand a better place to live.

The WaterBoy is a Hamilton based charity that is breaking down barriers for New Zealanders to participate in sports. They have been registered as a charity for just over a year, but have been providing services for longer than that. Since they started, The WaterBoy has worked with more than 50 kids, and impacted close to half a million lives.

The WaterBoy partners kids with business sponsors who through corporate social responsibility can give back, and help build stronger communities. Thomas says he himself wouldn't be where he is today if it weren't for sport.

"Everyone deserves opportunities to participate. And coming from a sports background myself, I know that through

sports, kids can gain increased self confidence, respect, and pride. Sport cuts through cultures and backgrounds, and puts everyone on a level playing field. Playing sport is part of being kiwi," says Thomas.

"Some of the same kids who would have had the opportunity to play sport 20 years ago are struggling to find a way. Instead, they're hanging out with friends after school and they're looking for the adrenaline rush of that first tackle, just in the wrong places" says Thomas.

The WaterBoy also run speaker series tackling homophobia in sports. Most kids who come to The WaterBoy are referred by schools, agencies, or other charities. Currently they offer services to the Waikato, but have plans to expand their services into the Bay of Plenty.

Tuwhirinui Falwasser (Tu) has been part of WaterBoy since it's early days. Now a student at Hamilton Boys High, Tu met Thomas when he was 11 years old. Tu says that when he met Thomas, he found it hard in social situations, and could have easily gone down the wrong path in life.

"I struggled financially, and was in lots of fights when I was little," says Tu.

Tu says that The WaterBoy has had a huge positive impact on his life.

“The WaterBoy set the foundation for helping me be a better self. I was very awkward in social settings, and being part of The WaterBoy has helped my confidence” says Tu.

Tu is grateful to his sponsors, Blue Wallace Surveyors Ltd. His sponsors gifted him and his brother with bikes, which was a huge help, because transport to sports games was a big barrier to participation. Through The WaterBoy, Tu became involved in rugby, hip hop, and Muay Thai.

Tu now tries to give back to The WaterBoy. Tu is at the WaterBoy offices where many of the kids who are part of the WaterBoy programme are busy making Christmas cards to give to sponsors.

“I try to make my way by paying back. So I come and help Thomas when he needs me. Today I helped with set up. I like to be like him, and see Thomas as a mentor.”

Penny Boyce is the videographer for The WaterBoy, and says that The WaterBoy is a great place to work because it offers the most rewarding work.

“I love the work, the kids are awesome, and it is so much more rewarding telling a story when the work you do really matters” says Penny.

The WaterBoy realises that it is not just sports that can help people become well rounded, happy individuals. They have also provided opportunities for kids to participate in other areas, including in the performing arts, and assistance finding work.

To find out more about The WaterBoy, visit www.theWaterBoy.org.nz