

## Y-men to the rescue

### Superheroes sorting out kindy problem

MICHELLE DUFF



ANDREW GORRIE/Fairfax NZ

FIRST STEPS: Norton Harrison, Liam Murphy and Samuel Hosking, of the Y men, a group of young men who underwent an intensive course to train them teach early childhood groups, seen here with kids from Owhiro Bay Kindergarten.

While most young men would run a mile from early starts and crying kids, a group of self-styled superheroes from Wainuiomata enjoy being in the minority.

Known as the Y-men, the group of eight from Lower Hutt are the first graduates of a pilot programme, funded by the Government, to encourage more male kindergarten teachers.

New Zealand has a chronic shortage of male early childhood education teachers, who make up only 1.7 per cent of the country's teachers.

Alongside the Social Development Ministry, the Wellington Kindergarten Association set up the six-month programme to get unemployed young men working next to qualified teachers at kindergartens, while receiving training and career guidance.

Association general manager Amanda Coulston said the Y-men had acted as role models and encouraged different ways of working.

"Young men bring a different energy to some of us old girls," she said. "So many of these children, if they don't see men in early childhood, they won't see them until secondary school in a teaching role.

"It was a matter of how we could start a programme where young men are involved in the kindergarten in a way that benefits the children."

Graduate Liam Murphy, 21, said that, while their mates gave them stick to start with about being weirdos, he and friends Norton Harrison, 23, and Samuel Hosking, 22, did not see any harm in giving it a try.

"We thought, 'Oh yeah, sweet as, we'll give it a go,' and the first two weeks we were like, 'Oh, all these kids!' And there was so much stuff to do, our morning wake-ups went from noon to 6.30 ... we were a little bit nervous, seeing if we would be able to cope.


"Then a few weeks into it we just started loving it. And driving home, instead of talking about our normal stuff, we'd be talking about what kids made us laugh today and that."

Mr Harrison, who was placed at Owhiro Bay Kindergarten, said the job was rewarding. "At the end of the day you think of the things you've achieved, like teaching a kid how to write his name ... make them stop crying. Every day is different."

Six of the participants were going on to teachers' college, and two pursuing other studies.

The association plans to work with the ministry to expand the Y-men programme this year.

### Comments:

**KC the 2nd** #19  via mobile 08:38 pm Jan 20 2012  
This is awesome! Keep it up!

**Sonja** #18 07:27 pm Jan 20 2012  
I am the super proud mum of Liam Murphy. I have never seen him so excited to get up and go to work and discussing the joy that these children brought to him, bonding with children of various cultures and gaining the knowledge and insight into the Early Childhood Curriculum. All these young men, with their enthusiasm and energy will be an asset to any kindergarten or early childhood facility!!

**cj** #17 04:38 pm Jan 20 2012  
Its great to finally read positive comments on a story. Excellent stuff.

**Mum of two** #16 01:52 pm Jan 20 2012  
We were lucky enough to have one of the lads with our kindy last year and the kids really benefited from having him around.... Awesome scheme. Keep it up and thanks Sam!

**SMS** #15 01:46 pm Jan 20 2012  
The kindy my son goes to had one of these young men there. He did a great job and the kids loved him being there. He will be missed when term starts again this year

**rach** #14 01:17 pm Jan 20 2012

WOW!! what can I say. Brings a tear to my eyes!! to know that you can get so much joy out of something you really would have never thought of is so special. You guys deserve all the good things to come your way out of this. I wish you all the best. You are truly inspirational to not only myself but to many young men out there. Ka Pai

**Lucy** #13 10:54 am Jan 20 2012  
You guys are awesome! Really inspiring to read. I hope more young guys see this and follow your lead.

**Miramarfamily** #12 10:31 am Jan 20 2012  
Great idea indeed. This program should be extended wherever and however possible. Liam Murphy was at our son's kindy last year and he was so popular with the kids. I think they really responded to have a male around. He was fab and we'll all miss him this year. I hope he goes on to great things in the early childhood sector (goodness knows it needs a boost after successive funding cuts).

**Riria Hotere** #11 09:57 am Jan 20 2012  
YOU GUYS ARE AWESOME! Our kids need more GOOD male role models. Keep it up. You're an inspiration to many young men, hopefully.

**Nicole** #10 09:24 am Jan 20 2012  
That is so awesome! Well done guys :)

**Divide by Zero** #9 09:20 am Jan 20 2012  
Go guys! What a fantastic idea. Be good to see something similar take off around the rest of the country, too!

**Nick** #8 09:16 am Jan 20 2012  
I've just had a son and I want him to have positive male role models in his life as he's growing up (in addition to me of course!).

This seems like a great initiative, I hope more guys get on board it'll have so many positive effects for them and the kids.

**mike k** #7 09:07 am Jan 20 2012

Excellent little article

Good for you guys - go for your lives!

**Amanda** #6 09:06 am Jan 20 2012

It's fantastic that stuff is reporting positive news about the Wainuiomata community for a change. It looks like these are stand up guys in the community and it is nice to hear of young people who are having a positive impact. Well done, guys!

**Orly** #5 09:00 am Jan 20 2012

This is awesome! Good on you guys for giving it a go, and it's so great that you enjoy it so much. Hope there are more young men out there who will sign up.

**bruce.b** #4 08:50 am Jan 20 2012

Taking unemployed young men and placing them into an environment like this so as to benefit the little ones and the course participants??? did I read this wrong?? or has someone finally followed through on an idea that is not short of brilliant. I liked the "after a couple of weeks we started talking about the kids and our day", that is called a shift in focus, having a purpose that gets into the head. Congrats to whomever realised the potential and got this running, big ups to the Y men..!

**Catherine** #3 08:27 am Jan 20 2012

I think this is a great ideal; we certainly need more men teaching our young children. Good on the guys, the kindergarten teachers and the parents and children for supporting the initiative. Now the guys just need to complete their three year degree to join the ranks of our amazing qualified early childhood teachers. I hope they have now developed the passion that will see them through to graduating as self aware and culturally responsive advocates of children's rights under the curriculum of Te Whariki.

**Denise** #2 08:08 am Jan 20 2012

Thats awesome, go the Y men!!

**RC** #1 07:50 am Jan 20 2012

This is a fantastic initiative. Good Luck to the Y men.