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## Nominations open for Bunnings Home Ground Heroes – celebrating local Touch legends



From left to right: Stevie Wall and 2024 Home Ground Hero Steve 'Huddy' Hudson

Bunnings and Touch New Zealand are once again calling on the Touch community to nominate a 'Home Ground Hero' who goes above and beyond the call of duty in support of the game. The initiative celebrates unsung heroes who ensure players get to games, kits are ready, and tournaments run smoothly. Five recipients are selected each year and receive \$5,000 to invest into their Touch community.

Steve 'Huddy' Hudson was honoured as one of five Home Ground Heroes in 2024 for his commitment to Rotorua Touch. Hudson discovered Touch when he was 16 and is now involved in every facet of the game. He plays, trains junior referees, and is currently preparing to compete in the upcoming Bunnings Masters Championships in Christchurch this March.

Noelani Hudson, Steve's wife, says, "Steve believes the Touch community is not just a sports team – it's your family and you look after your family on and off the field."

Hudson's dedication has fuelled Touch's growth in Rotorua, growing from 120 teams to more than 220 over the past six years. Hudson's \$5,000 grant has enabled him to contribute more to Rotorua Touch, providing teams with uniforms as well as financing a free school holiday programme to teach local Tamariki basic ball skills and introduce them to the sport he loves.

Joe Sprangers, Touch NZ Chief Executive says, "Home Ground Heroes provides a meaningful way to acknowledge those in our Touch community who give back to the sport we love, making it possible for us all to enjoy."

"We are grateful to celebrate another year in partnership with Bunnings, who work alongside us to grow the game and honour those in our community who are doing the mahi".

Melissa Haines, Bunnings NZ General Manager says, "We are looking forward to celebrating another group of Touch heroes who make a positive difference to their community. Many of our team members play touch and are volunteers

# MEDIA RELEASE

or spectators themselves and understand the vital role that these heroes play. Recognising them is our way of backing local”.

Now in its fourth year, Bunnings Home Ground Heroes has celebrated 15 Touch legends from across Aotearoa. To enter, nominators will need to demonstrate how their nominee makes a positive impact the wider Touch community. They will also need to explain how \$5,000 would be used to further their efforts in the Touch community.

Nominations will close on March 15 and winners will be announced in early April 2025. To find out more about the 2025 Home Ground Heroes, visit: [Touch New Zealand - Bunnings Home Ground Heroes \(touchnz.co.nz\)](https://touchnz.co.nz)

**ENDS**

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## Notes to the editor:

Bunnings Warehouse has been the Principal Partner of Touch NZ since 2018. During this time, the sport has experienced an increase in membership, growing support from the community and a positive boost to the overall experience of the game.



# MEDIA RELEASE



## Lesley Woodhouse

Starting out in administration, Lesley has become the backbone of Touch North Harbour. She runs modules, organises teams, referees, and tournaments, ensuring everyone feels welcome and cared for. Her efforts have enabled the club to flourish, and players to thrive under her guidance and care.



## Diana Manu

The driving force behind Touch Kapiti Horowhenua, Diana's dedication to her Touch community has taken the province to new heights. Her consistent focus to provide the very best for players, referees, and coaches alike, have been felt by all and her passion for the sport creates an incredible culture for the developing players.





# MEDIA RELEASE



## Dennis Thompson

Dennis has dedicated countless hours coaching youth players in Southland. He's passionate and inspires those around him, which has contributed to the growth of Touch in the region. During his tenure as youth coach, Dennis has helped to develop young players to compete at a national level and achieve medal success.



## Jemma Taikato

The face of Nelson Touch, Jemma has worked tirelessly for over a decade to build her Touch community from grassroots through to representative programmes. Supporting and encouraging players, managing teams, and coordinating tournaments, Jemma has been committed to growing the sport in her region.

