

MEDIA RELEASE

Local Touch legends wanted: Bunnings Home Ground Heroes nominations open



2022 Bunnings Home Ground Hero, Luke Chapman surrounded by his whanau

Nominations are open to celebrate the unsung heroes whose dedication and generosity help their Touch communities thrive, with selected recipients receiving \$5,000 to reinvest in grassroots sport

As one of New Zealand's most community-driven sports, Touch relies on the tireless commitment of volunteers and supporters who give far beyond the sidelines to help players train, compete and represent their communities.

Bunnings Home Ground Heroes is inviting Touch communities across Aotearoa to recognise the volunteers who make the game possible. From organisers and coaches to those working tirelessly behind the scenes, the initiative celebrates the unsung individuals whose passion, commitment and mahi keep Touch thriving at a grassroots level.

Over the past five years, 20 Home Ground Heroes from communities nationwide have been recognised for their outstanding contributions to Touch. Their stories reflect the heart of the Touch community and highlight the lasting impact one dedicated person can make.

Touch NZ Chief Executive, Joe Sprangers, said the partnership continues to make a meaningful difference.

"Through the Bunnings Home Ground Heroes programme, Touch NZ has the opportunity to recognise and celebrate the people who are the backbone of our communities. In partnership with Bunnings, we've been able to acknowledge 20 remarkable individuals over the past five years, and we're excited to continue celebrating these everyday heroes," said Sprangers.



MEDIA RELEASE

Bunnings NZ General Manager, Melissa Haines said, “Touch communities thrive because of everyday New Zealanders who give their time and energy to others. Home Ground Heroes lets us support that impact in a meaningful way, helping local volunteers do even more for their players and whānau. With many of our own team part of the Touch community, we’re proud to open nominations for 2026 and continue backing the people who strengthen their communities.”

Past recipients have used the support to expand local initiatives, reduce barriers for families and invest in equipment that strengthens participation. Among them is 2022 winner, **Luke Chapman**, who has dedicated endless hours and energy to working with others in the Touch community to develop and improve their game.

“We’ve been able to put the funding towards essential gear, gazebos, uniforms and our prizegiving’s,” says Chapman. “Running completely fees-free modules means we can cover things like referee costs and remove any financial pressure on families, especially those with multiple children, allowing everyone to take part.”

In East Tamaki, 2023 Home Ground Hero Winner, **Edie-May Johnson** is a passionate advocate for local kids and their families, working hard to make sure every child has the chance to take part. With the \$5,000 she’s been able to “invest in new equipment and, most importantly, continue supporting our kids and their families. Our programme remains completely free, with no playing fees, ensuring every child can take part regardless of financial circumstances”

Leader of the Pukekohe Rugby Touch Module and 2025 Home Ground Heroes Winner, **Rolph Watson**, brings decades of experience as a player, coach, referee, administrator, and mentor, his passion and commitment have strengthened the sport’s presence in Pukekohe. “I was greatly appreciative of being selected as a benefactor of the \$5,000 grant with the overwhelming objective of being able to ‘give-back’ to our community becoming a reality. The grant was shared to our local Club (Pukekohe Rugby Touch Module) and our local High School (Pukekohe High School ‘PHS’).”

The 2026 Bunnings Home Ground Heroes initiative now invites Touch communities nationwide to nominate those who embody this same dedication. Nominators will simply need to outline how their nominee positively impacts the Touch community and how a \$5,000 grant would further strengthen their efforts.

Nominations close Saturday, 14 March 2026, with winners to be announced in mid-April.

For more information on the 2026 Bunnings Home Ground Heroes programme, visit: [Touch New Zealand - Bunnings Home Ground Heroes \(touchnz.co.nz\)](https://touchnz.co.nz)

- ENDS -

Notes to the editor:

Since 2018, Bunnings Warehouse has been the principal partner of Touch New Zealand and the naming-rights sponsor for all national tournaments. In 2026, the Bunnings Home Ground Heroes initiative returns to recognise the volunteers who go above and beyond to support the Touch community, with five recipients each receiving \$5,000 to reinvest locally. Making a positive difference in the Touch community is just a small way Bunnings can lend a hand to the communities in which we operate.

For media enquiries please contact:

Joe Sprangers – Touch New Zealand	+64 27 282 8691 joe@touchnz.co.nz
Nicki Covich – Bunnings NZ	+64 21 135 2780 nicki.covich@bunnings.co.nz
Chloe Koutsoukis – Sunday Gravy	+61 466 568 412 chloe@sundaygravy.com.au



MEDIA RELEASE

[Bunnings](#) is a leading retailer of home and lifestyle products for consumer and commercial customers in Australia and New Zealand. We are a major supplier to project builders, commercial tradespeople and the housing industry. Our store network in New Zealand is made up of 51 locations, comprising Bunnings Warehouses, smaller-format stores and trade centres. This physical network is supported by a growing e-commerce ecosystem and supply chain network. Bunnings employs more than 5,000 team members across the country.

