

# NEW HOOPS, NEW LEAGUES & NBL PLAYERS

## Exciting times for basketball in the Wairarapa!

Y Central has joined forces with Capital Basketball to help hundreds of kids and young people in the Wairarapa get started in basketball. Together the organisations are teaming up to deliver free basketball leagues, train coaches and referees, and boost the sport's profile across the region.

Around 500 kids will be involved in the new leagues, estimates Ben Keat, Chief Operations Officer for YMCA Central; they start with miniball, then move on to intermediate and secondary school leagues. Thanks to local fundraising, new hoops have just been installed at the YMCA in Masterton and the facility is looking better than ever.

"We have had a vision to make the Y the home of basketball within the Wairarapa," says Ben. "We've committed to funding a development officer position with Capital Basketball and free basketball leagues for the rest of 2020 as part of our post COVID 'Let kids be kids again' campaign, so we can grow the sport and get more kids moving."

The new development officer will be Jackson Stubbins, a current NBL player with the Manawatu Jets who was part of the championship-winning Saints team in 2017.

"Jackson is a great resource; he's been involved in our Kiwihoops programme in schools and the kids really love working with him," says Damien Ekenasio, general manager of Capital Basketball. "Thanks to the YMCA we have an exciting opportunity to get kids activated, by giving them a safe and fun environment where they can get moving."

Basketball has been growing in popularity for many years – it's now the second most-played sport at New Zealand secondary schools, just behind netball. Ekenasio is hoping that the partnership between the Y and Capital Basketball can get more young players to have a go, as well as training more coaches and referees.

"The free leagues and Jackson are just for this year right now. But we'd like to maintain that momentum, work together and build from there, to keep driving basketball in the Wairarapa."

For the team at Y Central, partnerships like these are a great way to bring sports expertise into the Y's great venues – and into the lives of hundreds of Kiwi kids.

"Sporting organisations have come out of COVID and they're struggling," says Ben. "The Y has real expertise in managing recreation facilities, building strong communities,

developing young people and strengthening families, put this all together with specialist sport providers such as Capital Basketball and it's a model for the future. Not only that we want to enable sports to get ahead without relying on gaming funding to survive which will in turn mean more Kiwi kids being active and healthy."

The nationwide YMCA network is the largest not-for-profit provider of sport and recreation services in New Zealand. Together we provide services throughout the country, including indoor and outdoor sport and recreation options, health and fitness programmes and water-based activities. With over 2.7 million participations nationally in YMCA active recreation programming (as of April 2020) it is estimated that 1 in 6 New Zealanders is involved in some way with the YMCA.

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**From Left:**  
Brendan Owens;  
CE YMCA Central,  
Damien Ekenasio;  
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**Jackson Stubbins**  
Manawatu Jets player and  
new development officer  
for Capital Basketball in the  
Wairarapa

