

Providing schools with tools to save lives

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35 schools to get an automated external defibrillator (AED)

Cardiac arrest can affect anyone without warning, and for kids with congenital heart defects, it can even happen in the playground. In Aotearoa, 66 tamariki had a cardiac arrest in the 12 months between June 2019 and July 2020.

The Buddle Findlay Child Health Foundation and Embracing Hearts, a Wellington based charitable trust have teamed up to increase the number of AEDs in schools and the chance of cardiac arrest survival for these kids and the community. Congenital heart disease affects about one in every 100 babies, according to Heart Kids NZ, an organisation dedicated to providing support for children and families impacted by childhood heart defects.

Targeting schools in Aotearoa with students who have congenital heart defects, Embracing Hearts aims to eventually donate an AED to every New Zealand school that has a student in the Heart Kids NZ support network. Since Embracing Hearts' inception in 2019, 35 AEDs have been donated, 10 funded through the Buddle Findlay Child Health Foundation. The AEDs donated through the programme have been used eight times in schools since 2020.

"The simple act of purchasing defibrillators can have a big impact on the lives of these children and their whanau. It is our pleasure to support a project like this that will hopefully never be needed but is now available," says Buddle Findlay Partner and Buddle Findlay Child Health Foundation Trustee, Charlotte von Dadelszen.

"We continue to work with Embracing Hearts to make sure AEDs are available in all locations that could save lives and provide reassurance to the children, their whanau, and the wider communities."

In a cardiac arrest, a person's chance of survival decreases by approximately 10 percent for every minute that the person goes without CPR and a defibrillating shock. An AED delivers a safe electric shock to try and restart the heart.

Embracing Hearts Founder and Heart Mum, Emma Lawler says she knows first-hand just how worrying it can be sending your child with a heart defect to school.

"The risk of heart failure is very real for many kids with congenital heart defects. The peace of mind that this gives parents, teaching staff, caregivers and whanau is immeasurable. We are so proud to be giving heart families and their communities the reassurance that a defibrillator is right there if it's needed," Emma says.

Alongside the AEDs, the schools also received a 24/7 lock box which means entire communities have access in the event of an emergency. The devices are voice prompted so that anyone can safely use them in an emergency on a child or adult, without training.

The Buddle Findlay Child Health Foundation is a charitable trust established by the partners of Buddle Findlay in 2005 and supports tamariki in need of medical care in New Zealand. If hospitals face an urgent need for equipment, research or other vital resources, the Foundation will quickly consider applications for funding to help meet the need and provide an immediate and direct benefit to tamariki. Since its inception, the Buddle Findlay Child Health Foundation has donated over \$1,125,000 towards research and the purchase of medical equipment.

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