RUGBY FOR LIFE®

CHARITABLE TRUST

PATHWAYS, PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY MOMENTUM

2026 Q3 REVIEW





CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS













Whānau and friends of Rugby for Life

Quarter three of 2026 has been a special time for our clubs and communities. With the Ranfurly Shield arriving in Northland and both the Taniwha and the Kauri reaching their finals, there has been a real buzz across Te Tai Tokerau, and that energy has flowed right through our network.

In September, the Blues Charitable Trust kept its promise to reconnect with the rangatahi from our Leadership weekend in March. Twenty of the original participants, some travelling from as far as Te Kao, gathered at Northland Rugby to reflect on their growth. Each received a personalised Leadership and Career Profile and heard from leaders in business, education and rugby. We thank the Blues Charitable Trust for their ongoing commitment to our young people.

We were also incredibly proud of Jahrome Kiro, a Year 12 student at Ruawai College, who became the first Rugby for Life rangatahi to sail on the R. Tucker Thompson. Over seven days he climbed the rigging, faced his fears and was elected skipper by his peers. Jahrome's story is exactly what Rugby for Life is about: creating opportunities for the future leaders of our region.

As the winter season drew to a close, our clubs came together for prizegivings and celebrations recognising players, coaches, managers, volunteers and supporters. These occasions honour the many hours given behind the scenes and reflect the pride and belonging our clubs create.

This has also been a massive quarter for fundraising, with $741,291 raised across our network. The standout was Aupōuri being granted $688,991 from Foundation North for their Stage 2 club rebuild. This is a game-changer for that club and its wider community, and a facility that will serve generations to come. Congratulations to everyone involved.

As we head into the final quarter of 2026, planning is well underway across our network. The clubs have evolved into multi-sport hubs - for post-season and pre-season activities, including other summer sports like touch rugby, tag, tennis, softball and other community initiatives. These activities keep the members connected and engaged year-round, ensuring our clubs remain thriving hubs for their communities and build momentum for an even stronger 2027.

Finally, our sincere thanks to our funders, sponsors, donors and community partners. Your support makes all of this possible. Together, we are ensuring rugby remains far more than a game: a pathway to leadership, opportunity and belongin

Thank you for your ongoing support.
Ngā mihi nui

Ajit Balasingham
Chair of the Board
Rugby for Life



RUGBY FOR LIFE CHARITABLE TRUST

LEADERSHIP AT SEA



Jahrome Kiro's Voyage on the R. Tucker Thompson

On 26 September, Jahrome Kiro, a Year 12 student at Ruawai College, became the first Rugby for Life rangatahi to sail on the R. Tucker Thompson, Northland's own tall ship.

Based in Opua in the Bay of Islands, the traditional schooner is run by the R. Tucker Thompson Sail Training Trust, which takes young people from across Te Tai Tokerau on seven-day youth development voyages built around confidence, leadership and teamwork. Nominated for the opportunity, Jahrome joined 11 other rangatahi on board for the week.

Jahrome has a track record of putting his hand up for new experiences. In March he attended the Rugby for Life Leadership weekend with the Blues Charitable Trust, and he is also part of The Services Academy, run with the support of the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Defence Force. He explained his reason for joining the voyage, saying, "I wanted to take on this opportunity to push myself in a new environment. I enjoy being challenged and learning new things about myself in leadership positions."

The week tested him in several ways. Going without his phone was familiar ground after his Services Academy camps, and he found making friends face to face far more rewarding than a screen. The Tucker Challenge asked more of him, requiring him to climb the rigging and face one of his fears. "I'm not a small teenager, and it takes a lot of upper body strength. I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it," he says, and he did.

On Takeover Day, the crew chose their skipper in a blind vote and selected Jahrome. Leading the boat meant delegating tasks and keeping everything running smoothly, including thinking quickly to correct the vessel when it began tipping while keeping the crew safe. The R. Tucker Thompson skipper noted his leadership presence throughout the week, along with the sound decision-making and critical thinking that sailing demands, qualities shaped in part by the discipline of The Services Academy.

Snorkelling, beach and night games, and new friendships with the other rangatahi on board all made his list of highlights, though Jahrome's honest answer was everything. The lesson he is bringing home is "to back my decisions more and trust myself." His advice for future voyagers is to "go on the boat like a sponge," take in everything on offer and step outside their comfort zone.

Rugby for Life is proud to partner with the R. Tucker Thompson, whose work aligns closely with our kaupapa of creating opportunities for the future leaders of Te Tai Tokerau. Ka mau te wehi, Jahrome, and we look forward to offering more opportunities like this in 2027.



The R. Tucker Thompson, home for the week for Jahrome and other rangatahi.



Jahrome with his R. Tucker Thompson Voyage Certificate. Ka pai tō mahi!



Jahrome with the other 11 rangatahi and crew on the final day of the voyage.

Jahrome's Voyage at a Glance

- First Rugby for Life rangatahi to sail on the R. Tucker Thompson
- Seven-day youth voyage from Opua alongside 11 other rangatahi
- Climbed the rigging during the Tucker Challenge
- Elected skipper by blind vote on Takeover Day
- Awarded his R. Tucker Thompson Voyage Certificate

RUGBY FOR LIFE CHARITABLE TRUST

EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING & EDUCATION (E,T&E) SNAPSHOT

Building Sustainable Pathways Beyond the Field

The Ranfurly Shield's arrival in Northland, alongside the Taniwha and the Kauri both reaching finals this season, has energised Te Tai Tokerau. That success has given rugby real visibility across the region and opened valuable doors with local businesses, schools and industry partners. Rugby for Life's strong partnership with Northland Rugby provides a natural bridge into these high-performance environments, helping rangatahi balance sporting ambition with practical planning for careers, education and employment.

GET INVOLVED

Employers interested in offering work experience or apprenticeships to local talent are warmly invited to contact Matt Dennis, Rugby for Life's Employment, Training and Education Manager at:

matthew.d@rugbyforlife.org.nz



1.

101 OUTCOMES AND COUNTING

The E, T&E programme continues to build momentum, reaching 101 employment, education and training outcomes, with 36 of those achieved since March.

- 81 employment placements, including 59 direct E, T&E placements and 22 placements through the grassroots club network.
- Direct placements made up of 34 casual contracts, 11 permanent full-time roles, 10 fixed term full-time roles and 4 fixed term part-time roles.
- Club network placements driven by local leaders at Hikurangi RC (14) and Otamatea Hawks RC (8)
- 20 education and training enrolments, spanning tertiary study and vocational certifications at the University of Otago, Massey University, Wintec and NorthTec.



2.

PERSONALISED PLAYER PATHWAYS

The move from secondary school into employment or tertiary study is a significant step, particularly for young people managing representative rugby commitments at the same time.

Through its connection with Northland Rugby, the programme has directly supported 12 young representative players, building individual pathways as they move from school into work, training or both. Starting these conversations early means each athlete is supported on a tailored journey that sets them up for long term success on and off the field.



3.

COLLECTIVE SUPPORT AND WRAPAROUND CARE

Working alongside Brett Williamson, who oversees the Northland Rugby Men's and Age Group Academy, and Natarsha Ganley, who oversees Women's and Age Group Pathways, Rugby for Life has established a joined-up approach to athlete development.

Together, the team supports Academy and representative players to balance rugby with work, apprenticeships and education, so no one has to choose between pursuing their sporting goals and building a long-term career.

BLUES CHARITABLE TRUST: RETURNS TO NORTHLAND



Continuing the Leadership Journey Six Months On

Following the leadership experience in Auckland in March, the Blues Charitable Trust kept its promise to reconnect with rangatahi later in the year. On 2 September, Rob, Rosey and Harrison travelled to Northland Rugby for a follow-up session with 20 of the original participants, some travelling from as far as Te Kao.

The session gave rangatahi the chance to reflect on what had changed since March and keep building their own understanding of leadership. Every participant received a personalised Leadership and Career Profile prepared by the Blues Charitable Trust. Each profile draws together their personality, communication style, leadership strengths, values and career aspirations into a practical resource they can return to as they weigh up subject choices, further study and employment.

A panel Q&A brought together voices from business, logistics, education and rugby, each sharing their own career path and the lessons learned along the way. Rugby for Life thanks Brent Molineaux from Northland Waste, Chris Carmichael, Zac Bean and Connor Mackie from Mainfreight, Brooke Kapa from the Blues, Brett Williamson from Northland Rugby and Emma Rankin from NorthTec for their time and insight.

The day then moved back into the rugby environment, with the group watching the Taniwha train, taking photos with the Ranfurly Shield and sharing kai with the players, a highlight for many of the students and their whānau. Rugby for Life also thanks Northland Rugby Union for hosting the session and Caterfresh for the catering. We look forward to continuing this mahi with the Blues Charitable Trust for Northland's rangatahi in 2027 and beyond.

The Northland Follow-Up at a Glance:

- 20 of the original 33 rangatahi reunited with the BCT team at Northland Rugby on 2 September
- Every participant received a personalised Leadership and Career Profile
- Panel Q&A with leaders from Northland Waste, Mainfreight, the Blues, Northland Rugby and NorthTec
- Taniwha training, the Ranfurly Shield and kai with the players to close the day

Strengthening community sport across the wider region.







RUGBY FOR LIFE CHARITABLE TRUST

CLUB IMPACT highlights

$741,291
Raised Across RFL Clubs

Grassroots fundraising, sponsorship and grants continue to drive sustainable community sport outcomes across the network.





AUPŌURI

COMMUNITY

- Senior Men's League team won the TRL Grand Final with a try on the hooter, a partnership between Waipapakauri and Aupōuri that brought many whānau back to the club
- Free training space provided for the Te Aupōuri Māori Rugby League Tāne and Wāhine teams ahead of Nationals
- Te Ara Rangatahi youth evenings drawing 35 to 45 rangatahi, free of charge
- Year 7 and 8 netball team competed at the Kurangaituku Tournament in Rotorua, a first for every player

FUNDRAISING

- $688,991 Foundation North grant approved for the Stage 2 club rebuild, with resource consent granted and building consent pending







HIKURANGI

COMMUNITY

- IMB/JMB team went unbeaten at the NZ Junior Rugby Festival, placing on points
- Ministry of Education Community Youth Connect Activation hosted at the club
- Waste management and recycling initiative launched





ONERAHI

COMMUNITY

- Change rooms converted into an off-season gym used five or more days a week, with $2,000 of new equipment added
- A parents' celebration dinner led to a new Junior Working Committee with 10 volunteers
- Club Day drew more than 500 people, including a Past vs Present game for the tamariki
- New office, wheelchair access ramp and hāngī room completed
- Rangatahi Leadership referees preparing to officiate the touch module from 9 October

FUNDRAISING

- $27,000 secured, with $20,000 from Grassroots Trust for building upgrades and the hāngī room and $7,000 from Wilderness People for junior and rangatahi uniforms and equipment



MAUNGATŪROTO

COMMUNITY

- U11s combined with Eastern to win the Hone Heke Challenge under the Otamatea banner
- Northland Rugby skills and drills session for the U9s and their new mid-season coach
- U9s played in the Matariki Festival at Tomarata

FUNDRAISING

- Three local businesses covered prizegiving trophies and medals, with sponsors subsidising training tees



OHAEAWAI

COMMUNITY

- Trainee referee mentored weekly on U13 games, building towards IMB and senior refereeing in 2027
- New goal posts made by a local company
- Second hand lights gifted by Glenfield Club at no cost, reducing a $300,000 project to $50,000

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CLUB IMPACT *highlights*







OTAMATEA

COMMUNITY

- CKW U15s won the Championship, with around 180 people at the CKW prizegiving
- Six Hawks players selected for Northland U16, U18 and U20 representative teams
- Mowhia Cook welcomed back into able-bodied rugby after losing his arm, and selected for the Clash of the Classics alongside Michael Tovine
- Senior rugby and netball teams played Whangaruru in the Hone Heke Challenge



RUAWAI

COMMUNITY

- Matariki Cup hosted by Tomarata brought five clubs together, with sponsor giveaways from Re-Sport, NRU, the Blues, Konnect and Firth, continuing a kaupapa started by Paddy Jackson in Ruawai
- Cross sub-union U11 games played with the Rodney/Otamatea sub-union, giving tamariki the chance to meet new clubs and teams



SOUTHERN

COMMUNITY

- Clubroom kitchen upgrade completed and a new chiller face installed in the bar
- U16s prizegiving held, with Re-Sport rugby balls gifted to every player

FUNDRAISING

- $11,500 raised through an auction supported by the Te Kōpuru Steering Group
- $13,800 in COGS funding secured over three years ($4,600 a year) for administration costs



WESTERN SHARKS

COMMUNITY

- Northland Rugby brought the Ranfurly Shield to the club, drawing around 200 tamariki, rangatahi and adults
- Northern Wairoa 10s Tournament and hāngī drew around 300 people, strengthening relationships and traditional rivalries between local clubs, with plans to grow it into a pre-season event in 2027
- Toilet upgrade underway, including new accessible toilets
- U11s travelling across Northland to play other clubs, building skills, confidence and whānau involvement
- Year 5 and 6 Rippa Rugby Tournament set up in Dargaville in partnership with Northland Rugby










COLIN McKENZIE
CHALLENGE
SHIELD


TARANAKI
TANIWHA
TEAM
TANIWHA
TEAM


Whanganui Taniwha
Arohatia!








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R·TUC




U7 RIPPA:
PLAYER OF THE DAY
RUGBY
PLAYER OF THE DAY
TAIAMAI
AZAIAH




WHĀNAU FAVE

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Thank You TO OUR FUNDERS, PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

From Aupōuri securing $688,991 from Foundation North for its Stage 2 rebuild to 101 employment, training and education outcomes, and new leadership experiences for rangatahi on land and at sea, quarter three has shown what becomes possible when clubs, partners and communities work towards the same goals.

Your backing helps our clubs grow into strong community hubs, gives young people access to leadership opportunities and career pathways, and supports the volunteers who keep community sport thriving across Te Tai Tokerau. We are especially grateful to the partners who opened their doors to our rangatahi this quarter, including the R. Tucker Thompson, the Blues Charitable Trust and Northland Rugby.

Thank you for standing alongside us. Together, we are building strong communities.

Ngā mihi nui,
The Rugby for Life Team

RUGBY FOR LIFE CHARITABLE TRUST

HELP US KEEP BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES

Your donation helps Rugby for Life support clubs, volunteers and rangatahi across Te Tai Tokerau.

Scan the QR code to give today or get in touch with the team to talk about partnering with us.

0272 312 455

clark.l@rugbyforlife.org.nz

rugbyforlife.org.nz

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