

# Central Leader

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YOUR PLACE, YOUR PAPER

Latest

## Family stays

A Range View Rd family at the centre of complaints have been given another chance.

The tenancy tribunal has rejected Housing New Zealand's bid to have the Salt family evicted.

■ Story P3

## Making dreams come true for boys

By JENNY LING



**Good influence:** I Have A Dream mentor Spencer Willis, right, is happy to give encouragement and advice to 12-year-old Robert Beniamina. Photo: JASON OXENHAM

Being a mentor is all about giving something back for Spencer Willis.

The 34-year-old is a volunteer for Wesley's I Have a Dream programme.

He grew up in a rough part of London and knows how hard it can be without support.

When Spencer was 14 his headmaster considered expelling him.

"The year head came in and gave me a second chance. I wasn't a great kid on the surface of things but this person saw something in me that I didn't necessarily see."

Spencer moved to New Zealand in 1999 and co-founded a youth research company.

He heard I Have a Dream sponsor Scott Gilmour talk about the project on television. I Have a Dream began in the United States in the early 80s to help children from low-income areas reach their education and career goals.

In 2003 Mr Gilmour sponsored 36 year 4 children from Wesley Primary into the project.

They have after-school tutoring and mentors to keep them on track.

Spencer started tutoring "dreamers" about four years ago, then began mentoring Robert Beniamina.

Over the past two years the pair have been on regular outings including golf, ten-pin bowling and fishing.


Robert, 12, who now attends Wesley Intermediate, says he gets more out of school by having Spencer there to help.

"It's been cool hanging out and he helps me and encourages me with my work," he says.

Coordinator Lynn Su'a says 20 male mentors are needed before the 53 children now in the programme start college.

She encourages men over 20 who might be interested to attend a training course from August 9.

For more information, contact Lynn, phone: 620 5411 or email: [lynn@ihaveadream.org.nz](mailto:lynn@ihaveadream.org.nz).

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