

Why the Phoenix wore their hearts on their sleeves

Discover how the Wellington Phoenix and McDonald's united for the Macca's Match For Good, raising vital funds for RMHC® New Zealand families.

On Saturday, 14 March, Hnry Stadium buzzed with excitement as the Wellington Phoenix took to the pitch. But for this special double-header, the most important victory happened far beyond the final whistle. The annual Macca's Match For Good united football fans, players, and communities for one shared goal: supporting Ronald McDonald House Charities® (RMHC®) New Zealand.

For families with a child in a hospital away from home, the emotional and financial toll can be overwhelming. McDonald's is incredibly proud to be the forever partner of RMHC New Zealand, a relationship spanning the charity's entire history in the country. McDonald's is also one of the biggest supporters of football in New Zealand, with a history of support spanning over 25 years.

To help this incredible cause, McDonald's restaurants matched every donation made in the week leading up to the game. Thanks to the generosity of Kiwis everywhere, the campaign successfully raised over \$50,000 – enough to fund over 200 nights of accommodation for families at RMHC Houses. These



Women's Wellington Phoenix players with RMHC family the Slaughters

funds will directly help families focus on what truly matters: spending time together while their child undergoes urgent medical treatment.

The Wellington Phoenix men's and women's teams wore bespoke kits that carried a deeply personal touch. Children staying at Ronald McDonald House were invited to help design the unique shirts. Featuring eight hearts, four butterflies, and a flower drawn by the families, these vibrant jerseys represented the real stories at the heart of the event.

Match-worn shirts from both games went straight to auction at kick-off. Fans bid on shirts from 33 players through MatchWornShirt, with all proceeds directing back into RMHC New Zealand to continue their vital work.

To truly understand the impact of the Macca's Match For Good, you only need to look at families like the Slaughters. Last year, Jordan and Ashleigh Slaughter's lives changed instantly when their four-month-old daughter, Layla, was diagnosed with aggressive infant leukaemia. Within hours, Layla was airlifted from Wellington to Christchurch to begin urgent treatment, facing intensive chemotherapy and multiple surgeries.

Throughout this unimaginable stress, Ronald McDonald House became the family's anchor.

"Ronald McDonald House became our second home," Ashleigh explains. "Having somewhere close to hospital, meals provided, and a space where our son could play lifted an enormous burden. When everything else felt out of control, that support meant everything."

Today, the Slaughter family is back home in Wellington, together. While little Layla will not remember her time at the facility, it remains a vital chapter in her survival story.

Simon Kenny, Head of Impact and Communications at McDonald's New Zealand, witnessed firsthand how the country rallied behind the initiative. "Seeing the community come together for this year's Match For Good has been incredibly special," says Kenny. "The shirt designs were incredibly well received and support from fans, our franchisees and customers across Aotearoa shows just how powerful sport can be. Thanks to that generosity, we've been able to raise vital funds for Ronald McDonald House and help more families stay close."

Every year, RMHC New Zealand offers free accommodation and support to over 3,500 families, taking care of the practical things in life so they can focus on their child. The incredible success of the Macca's Match For Good ensures this vital work continues.



Credit: Photomac @nzphotomac

Children connected to RMHC who walked out with the Wellington Phoenix players on game day.



Wellington Phoenix players with Bailey Slaughter



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To know more about the ongoing partnership between McDonald's and RMHC New Zealand, go to mcdonalds.co.nz/ronald-mcdonald-house-charities