

MATES 4 MATES

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WELCOME to 2017. I hope you all had a great Christmas and New Year, with safe travels, family fun and generally good times.

This coming year is already shaping up to be a massive one for Mates4Mates. Thanks to the ongoing support provided by RSL (Queensland Branch), our initiator and Foundation member, we're able to continue providing help where it's most needed.

We'll continue to work closely with the Veterans Services Team and the staff at Anzac House throughout 2017 in our joint commitment to rebuilding the lives of injured current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members and their families.

While there is often discussion in the media about the number of Ex-Service Organisations (ESO) working in isolation to support the veteran community – and some confusion regarding what we all do – I think we can agree that we are all working towards the common good.

From my perspective, it does not matter if people belong to more than one organisation and it does not matter which organisation provides the help. What does matter is that if somebody needs help, they get it.

Mates4Mates works with a number of ESOs and service providers to ensure that support is readily available to those who need it.

We ensure staff are aware of which organisations provide services that are complementary to what we do, so we can recommend Mates seek out other ESOs where necessary. This includes working closely with the likes of RSL (Queensland Branch), RSL (Tasmania Branch), various RSL Districts and a number of RSL Sub Branches, Legacy and the Bravery Trust.

In 2017, as Mates4Mates continues to grow, we remain committed to helping those in need and working collaboratively with others who share our passion for the cause.

Simon Sauer AM, CSC
CEO Mates4Mates <

DAWSON'S RIVER RETREAT 2017

FOLLOWING the success of the 2016 retreat, Mates4Mates is again offering Mates and their children the chance to join the five-day Dawson River Retreat in rural Central Queensland. Dates have been selected around school holidays, with the first taking place in early April. The retreat will see participants engage in team work, basic survival and problem solving skills along the tranquil banks of the Dawson River. To be eligible, children must be 14 years and over. For more details or to register interest, visit mates4mates.org/events or email admin@mates4mates.org. <

"Time and time again you hear about the benefits of equine therapy, but until you actually experience it – the connection you make between yourself and the horse – words don't do it justice."

- Equine therapy participant

EQUINE THERAPY 2017

THE Equine Therapy Program has already kicked off for 2017, with a highly successful couples course in Victoria's Yarra Valley in January. The program is available for Mates with PTSD and through carefully graded activities and group work, participants develop the ability to focus on the present and reduce emotional escalation. This in turn allows participants to better deal with anxiety, fear and frustration and develop healthier patterns of communication. Mates only and couples programs are planned for the Hunter Valley, NSW, South East Queensland, Cairns, Qld, and the Yarra Valley, Vic, throughout 2017. For more details visit mates4mates.org/events or email admin@mates4mates.org. <

MEET A MATE: Jethro Thompson

SEVENTY-ONE-YEAR-OLD John 'Jethro' Thompson, a Vietnam veteran and a regular at the Mates4Mates Family Recovery Centre in Brisbane, likes a challenge.

In December last year, there was a collective gasp among the crew of the tall ship *Tenacious* when he unexpectedly slid out of his wheelchair, 15 metres above deck, while scaling the ship's mast.

"It was a moment of excitement for everyone, I'm sure, but I'm pretty good at keeping calm in precarious situations like that – I've had a bit of experience in that regard," Jethro said with a grin.

In May 1967, due to a breakdown in orders, he accidentally stood on a landmine, suffering horrific injuries that would change his life forever.

"The blast killed two and wounded six. I lost my left leg in the explosion, blew my fingers off, sustained abdominal injuries, the whole kit and caboodle," Jethro said.

"I had 40 days in an American hospital in Vietnam and over a year in rehab in Australia, but I survived and slowly started to come to terms with my condition."

Jethro then endured losing his first wife to cancer in 1975 and became a "house dad" to his young children, despite his debilitating injuries that made the simplest of tasks difficult.

After marrying his second wife, Pearle, in 1978, Jethro moved from Victoria to Queensland

where he undertook volunteer work for the RSL as a Welfare Officer.

"I heard about this mob called Mates4Mates through the RSL and I must admit I wasn't sure about it all, with all the different activities and equipment. But I thought I'd better check it out before I started bagging it," Jethro said.

"I went to a Monday night barbecue meeting and talked with younger veterans and I really felt like sharing my experiences was helpful to them."

Jethro is an enthusiastic participant in Mates4Mates activities, including his first experience of Equine Therapy in January and last December's five-day



voyage on the tall ship *Tenacious*, specially designed to accommodate people with disabilities.

"It was very satisfying that I could be part of a team. I wasn't pushed aside, I helped set sails and I even steered the boat for an hour, which was pretty hard work for me with my physical injuries," Jethro said.

"My slight mishap while climbing the mast was no big deal really, I had an additional harness on that stopped me from falling – it was just a minor miscalculation on my weight distribution on the chair.

"It all added to the adventure anyway! I'd really like to take my 15-year-old grandson on the next sailing trip. It would be a fantastic experience and a real bonding moment I reckon." <

"I went to a Monday night barbecue meeting and talked with younger veterans and I really felt like sharing my experiences was helpful to them."

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NEW HORIZONS FOR MATES4MATES FAMILY



UP until a few months ago, Brent New's last memorable experience at sea was not something he preferred to dwell on; a border protection deployment for a month as part of his duties in the Army.

"I never wanted to join the Navy, too many confined spaces, and that deployment confirmed that sea legs

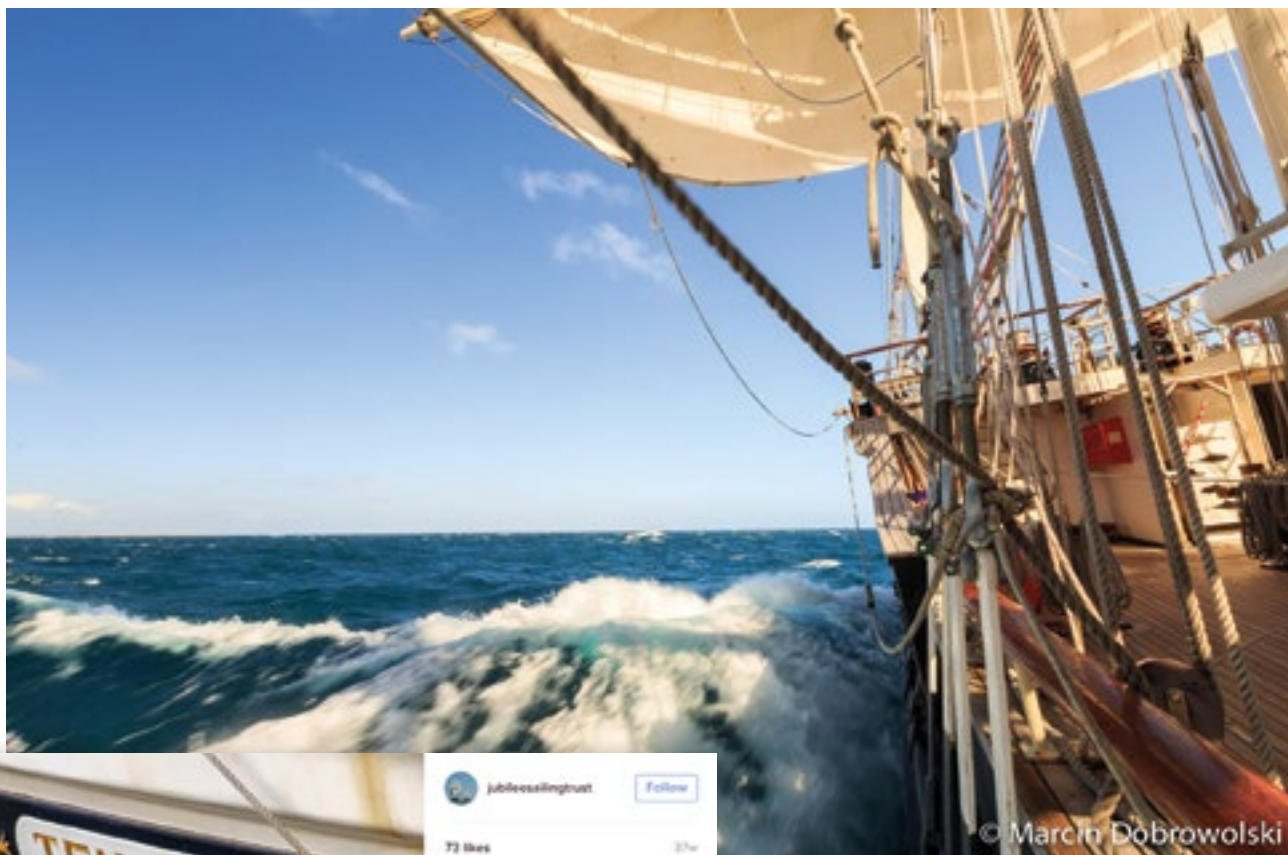
was something I certainly had no major desire to develop," Brent said.

After he discharged from the Army in 2003, Brent found the transition from "military grade" thinking to civilian life an insurmountable challenge.

"I got very angry and stressed over little things, like being late," Brent explained. "If I was stuck in traffic I would lose it, because being late when you are in the Army is a big deal and back then there was nothing and no-one to help me re-program my thought processes to how a civilian might think in those situations.

"It all built up over the years to the point where I was self-medicating with alcohol and drugs, just trying to quiet my mind."

Eighteen months ago, Brent reached rock bottom. In his family's words, he had a meltdown and was admitted



"I wanted to do something the whole family could participate in and being aboard a magnificent sailing ship with my mum, dad and sister was just too great an opportunity to miss," Brent explained.

As part of its Adventure Challenge program, Mates4Mates invited the New family to join 20

other ex-service personnel, many also bringing their partners, on a five-day voyage from Sydney Harbour down the east coast of Australia.

The brainchild of the UK-based Jubilee Sailing Trust, the voyage was aboard the 589-tonne tall ship *Tenacious*, one of only two sailing vessels of its kind in the world, designed specifically to accommodate people with physical and psychological injuries.

"For most of us, an ocean cruise is simply a nice way to spend a sunny day but for these men, women and their families, it's an experience of recovery and hope. In some cases, it could very well save or significantly change a life," explains Mates4Mates CEO Simon Sauer.

"The power and serenity of the ocean has been identified in our recovery program as having a lasting, positive impact on our members, to the point where it's

"It all built up over the years to the point where I was self-medicating with alcohol and drugs, just trying to quiet my mind."

to hospital to treat a psychiatric illness, later diagnosed as PTSD.

"I get pretty emotional remembering the night he came over to our place," his mum Maree recalls. "He sat on the couch, showed us a DVD about the effects military training can have on people and from behind where I was standing I could see the tears streaming down his face and then he handed us a suicide note.

"To see the man he is now, it's an amazing turnaround. He's confident, outgoing, talkative and caring. He's like the son we used to know before he joined the Army," Maree said, who served in the Army from 1974 to 1981.

As evidence of his transformation, in December last year 38-year-old Brent was not only embarking on another sea voyage to confront unknown challenges and hurdles, it was something he was eagerly anticipating. So much so, he decided to bring his whole family.

brought some of them back from the brink and onto the road to recovery," Simon said.

This was no relaxing cruise according to participants, as everyone was expected to pitch in and work as a team, from cleaning decks to rigging sails, even keeping watch at all hours of the night.

"As a family, we got the midnight to 4am slot one night aboard," explained Brent's father Stan, who served 20 years in the Army.

"I also did mess duties for the first time in 25 years, which was a bit of a shock to the system. But it was just great to all be working as a team and seeing some of the Mates develop confidence and really come out of themselves.

"On the last night of the voyage, many got up and spoke about their issues and experiences and that was a pretty emotional moment for everyone, especially those who brought partners, who would not normally get to hear their loved ones talking openly like that," Stan said.

"I think one of the greatest weapons against psychological trauma is a conversation and Mates4Mates gives people with a common background the chance to share experiences in a language civilians don't understand.

"In my 20 years with the Army, up to 1992 when I discharged, I wasn't even deployed to Tasmania. But the Army today is a different kettle of fish, with lots of deployments and lots of men and women exposed to things that can cause lasting issues in their lives.

"That's where Mates4Mates steps in and does a lot of good things. I can't speak highly enough about what they do and what's it meant for our family in particular," he said.

For Brent's part, he is establishing a new business, is a proud advocate for developing positive life strategies and an equally proud member of the Mates4Mates family.

"Mates4Mates has so many amazing activities, but at its core it's about understanding that everyone's the same – same fears, anxieties and challenges – and the importance of having a safe place to share those experiences," Brent said.

"I still think I'm better on land than at sea though: I did the Big Battlefield Bike Ride



last year and Dad I are keen riders together. "I certainly don't have the road rage I used to if I'm running late, although my biggest stress on the bitumen now is trying to beat the old man on two wheels over 40km kilometres!". <



"The power and serenity of the ocean has been identified in our recovery program as having a lasting, positive impact on our members."

Exercise

PHYSIOLOGISTS SET MATES ON THE PATH TO REHABILITATION

By Brett Taylor
Physical Rehabilitation Manager

DID you know that Accredited Exercise Physiologists (AEPs) are allied health professionals who have undertaken a four-year university degree and can help with common conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and arthritis?

AEPs have the knowledge to work in a variety of settings, including hospitals, health services, community health centres and in private practice – including the Mates4Mates Family Recovery Centres.

Recognised by Medicare, the Department of Veterans Affairs and other health funds, AEPs can prescribe treatment to help people with injuries, persisting pain, chronic disease, depression and weight management.

How do AEPs help?

Accredited Exercise Physiologists play a standalone role in rehabilitation and are not to be confused for physiotherapists or fitness professionals. They possess extensive knowledge and experience in health behaviour change counselling and are generally tasked with improving postural stability, decreasing muscular imbalances and re-establishing neuromuscular control.

Can an AEP help you?

The AEPs within each of the Family Recovery Centres understand the physical rehabilitation needs of our Mates and the need for a systematic and individualised approach to each injury or condition.

During an initial consultation, each Mate is assessed specifically for their condition/s in a non-invasive manner, with goals set between the AEP and the Mate to aid in the rehabilitation process.

The ultimate goal of our Exercise Physiologist and the Physical Rehabilitation and Wellness service teams is to



provide each Mate with strong individualised care and attention, which in turn builds confidence, leading to less anxiety and fear associated with movement.

In time, Mates are able to attend group physical training sessions and Rehabilitation Adventure Challenges with the support of their AEP.

Commonly treated conditions by an AEP include:

- Diabetes and pre-diabetes
- Cardiovascular disease
- Obesity
- Different forms of cancer
- Depression and mental health conditions
- Arthritis and osteoporosis
- Chronic respiratory disease and asthma
- Musculoskeletal injuries
- Neuromuscular disease.

Not sure if an AEP is right for you? Check in with your local Family Recovery Centre for further information on how they can help. <

MATES 4 MATES

Supporting Injured
Defence Force Mates.



Physical Rehabilitation & Wellbeing Services

Individual and group physical rehabilitation programs and complementary therapies for injured Defence Force Mates.

Mates4Mates also offers a range of services to immediate family members

TO DONATE OR FOR HELP CALL 1300 462 837

mates4mates.org