



Coastguard Supporter Newsletter | Autumn 2020

You helped Coastguard volunteers be first responders during a national tragedy.

The 9th of December 2019 will be a date forever etched in the memories of New Zealanders. After the deadly Whakaari White Island eruption, Coastguard volunteers were among the first on the scene.

One of the first calls made by White Island Tours boat *Phoenix* was to Coastguard Whakatane. Coordinating with the Police and St John, the Whakatane volunteer crew picked up two paramedics before getting underway to the Island which was shrouded in a huge mushroom cloud of ash and steam. Further down the coast, volunteers from Coastguard Opotiki were also preparing their rescue vessel to help.

It's a 50 kilometre journey from Whakatane to Whakaari White Island. With their adrenaline running high our volunteers didn't know what awaited them.

But with faith in their intensive training and rescue equipment, they knew they would be able to do whatever was necessary to help those in need.

When the volunteers arrived at the Island, many of the injured were on the White Island Tours boats. Without hesitation, one of the Coastguard volunteers jumped on board to help a badly burned victim fighting for their life. He stayed with them until the boat reached the Whakatane wharf.

Continued over.

Whakaari White Island eruption: It's because of you that Coastguard volunteers have the extensive training to be emergency first responders in a national crisis.



Coastguard volunteers come from all walks of life.

Meet the heroes saving lives at sea in their communities.

SEE INSIDE...

You helped Coastguard Volunteers be first responders during a national tragedy. (Continued)

As the boats started coming back with injured people, shore based Coastguard Whakatane volunteers worked alongside the other first responders. They helped wherever they were needed including sorting out the personal belongings of the tourists who'd been on the Island.

In the week following the eruption, Coastguard volunteers spent many hours searching for those still missing. Coastguard Air Patrol units searched from the air and volunteers from Coastguard Opotiki combed the water. *"It was three days of intensive, low level flying which required peak concentration,"* said Coastguard Northland Air Patrol volunteer and pilot Wily Morton. *"The days consisted of looking hard and long, turning, turning, holding, checking, rechecking and checking again, returning to Whakatane to fuel up and getting back out there, again and again and again."*

Out of all the emergency first responders involved in the immediate rescue operation, Coastguard were the only volunteers. It's because of you that our volunteers have the extensive training and equipment to provide this scale of response in a national crisis. Thank you for ensuring our volunteers could support our communities when they needed it most.

Volunteer heroes: The team from Coastguard Whakatane, locals who risk their own lives to save others at sea. (Photo taken 2013).



Coastguard pilot Larry Sutherland at the controls of Coastguard Delta, the aircraft operated by the Northland Coastguard Air Patrol. Photo Credit: Peter Heath, Northland Coastguard Air Patrol.

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.....”
Wily Morton, Coastguard Air Patrol



Coastguard New Zealand would like to acknowledge all who have been affected by the Whakaari White Island eruption.

Our thoughts are with those still in hospital and the friends and families of the loved ones lost.

Volunteer Shane, saving lives in his community, all thanks to you!

Summer is Coastguard's busy rescue season. Volunteers are called out to more than double the amount of life-threatening emergencies on the water.

Maketu local and Coastguard volunteer Shane Beech knows all too well the pressure summer brings for rescue crews around the country.

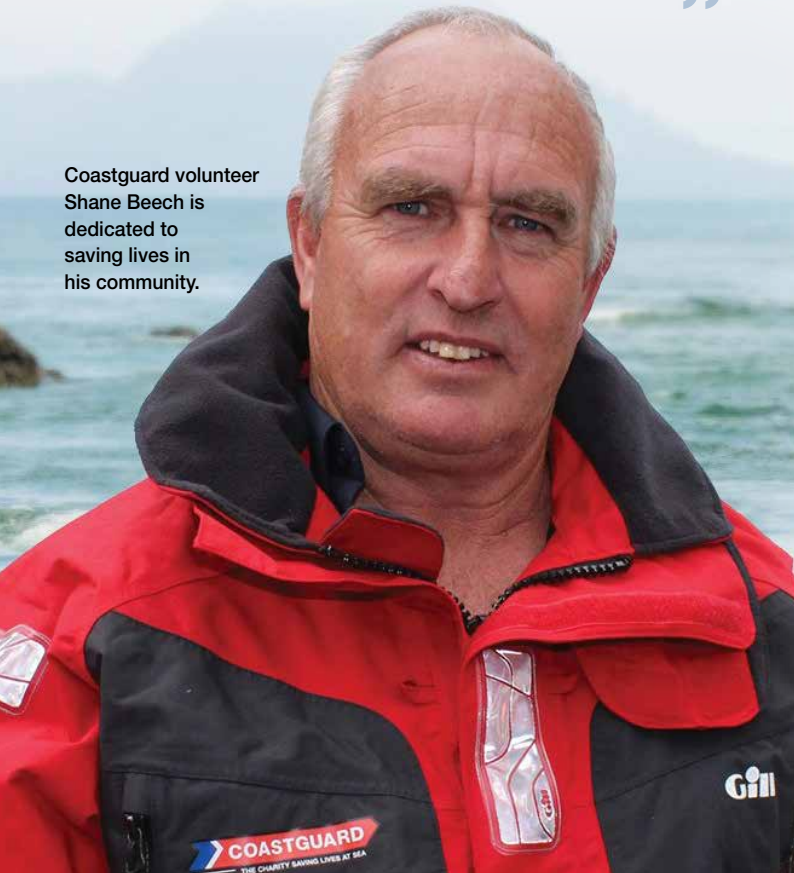
"I was working in a café down off the beach when a couple of distressed ladies came in yelling and screaming saying there were children in trouble out at sea. I had a quick look out the window and could see four heads floating just above the surface."

Straight away Shane alerted his fellow Coastguard volunteers. They launched three rescue jet skis to save the two boys - aged just eight and 12 - and two elderly woman who had been caught in a dangerous rip current.

Coastguard is all about people saving people and locals helping locals. **Thanks to your donations, Shane and volunteers like him are trained and ready 24/7 to save lives at sea.**

“ I was working in a café down off the beach when a couple of distressed ladies came in yelling and screaming saying there were **children in trouble out at sea** ”

Coastguard volunteer Shane Beech is dedicated to saving lives in his community.



Your support gives Coastguard volunteers the lifesaving training they need to save lives at sea.

Because of you, extraordinary volunteer **Tony Smith is rescue ready for any emergency.**

As well as saving lives at sea, Coastguard Clyde volunteer Tony Smith volunteers to help fight Australian bushfires.

Tony is often on standby for both Coastguard and the Fire Service. With two pagers in his pocket he can get called out to an emergency at any time. When the Australian bushfires began, Tony and his fellow Fire Service volunteers were across the ditch in a heartbeat to help.

Tony reflected on his time volunteering in Australia:

"You're helping the other firefighters take time off so they can actually get some rest... It's non-stop and they get worn down so much... It's good that we can go over and give them a break."

Tony had many roles - protecting homes, ensuring locals had fire plans in place and trying to move the fire away from people and their communities. With his team they saved over 400 homes from the flames.

"It's so intense on such a huge scale, even a lot of the Australian guys we were working with had never seen anything like it."

"You don't appreciate what you've got, until you've experienced what others have lost." A feeling he also gets from Coastguard's lifesaving work.

Coastguard volunteers come from all walks of life. Thanks to you, Tony has had the specialised training to become an experienced Coastguard volunteer. Your support gives volunteers like Tony the opportunity to broaden their emergency response skills to help and save lives wherever they find themselves in danger.

Thank you.

Meet Bernie Vinnell

Coastguard Mana

After a near-death experience at sea, Bernie Vinnell joined Coastguard Mana as a volunteer.



“ After my accident I found I was a little anxious getting back into the water but with the **encouragement of my fellow volunteers** this has now passed. ”

A feed of paua almost cost Bernie his life back in 2015. After diving off the back of his boat he suffered a shallow water blackout from holding his breath too long.

Floating face down, his daughter Amelia and son Aaron hauled him on board to give him CPR. As they headed back to the boat ramp they needed to call for help but realised skipper Bernie was the only one who knew how to use the radio. It was an oversight Bernie now realises could have cost him his life. Luckily there was a boat nearby and they were able to call out to them to radio the shore for help. When they arrived at the boat ramp, an ambulance was waiting.

Bernie sees himself in a lot of the boaties he's helped rescue, and the lesson he wants others to take away from his experience is to always be prepared. *"I hadn't let my crew know what all the bits and pieces were. Nine times out of 10, it's the skipper who gets into strife."*

Your donations support volunteers like Bernie to save lives at sea.

When did you join Coastguard and what is your role?

My daughter Amelia introduced me to Coastguard Mana and I joined in 2018.

What do you do when you're not at Coastguard?

I work as a painting contractor in the construction industry.

What has been your most rewarding experience at Coastguard?

The whole experience of joining Coastguard as a volunteer has been rewarding. As a trainee I've learnt so many

new skills and the confidence I've gained on the water is priceless. After my accident I found I was a little anxious getting back into the water but with the encouragement of my fellow volunteers this has now passed.

How has Coastguard changed you?

Having spent many years boating I had a lot of bad habits. But now thanks to the specialised training and mentoring I've received through Coastguard they've gone. I've gained an invaluable skill set that I think all boaties old and new could benefit from.



Callum Gillespie
Chief Executive Officer
Coastguard New Zealand

Thank you so much for helping our heroes save lives at sea!

Royal New Zealand Coastguard Inc is the charity saving lives at sea
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