



# COASTGUARD

THE CHARITY SAVING LIVES AT SEA



## Coastguard Supporter Newsletter | Christmas 2020



**Christmas will be a celebration for a family of four this year, all because of you.** Thank you for saving them.

**Thanks to you, our volunteers are ready 24/7, 365 days a year to respond to any call for help, and Coastguard Nelson were there for this lovely family. You made sure they still have each other to hug.**

Enjoying the last taste of the school holidays, Jackie, six-year-old Summer, Damien and eight-year-old Rueben headed out for a day of fishing. They checked the weather forecast, wore their lifejackets and put their phones in waterproof bags, but despite all this, their day on the water took an unexpected turn for the worse.

When the fish weren't biting and the weather began to turn, Damien decided to head into shore, but it was too late.

Out of nowhere, two large waves crashed over the stern, swamping the motor and flooding the boat with water.

Before they knew it, they were in the water clinging to their overturned boat, their lifejackets keeping them above water. They were terrified. With two young children, Damien and Jackie feared for their lives. **They had no time to raise the alarm... who was going to help them?**

Realising they were drifting further away from land and not knowing if help was on the way, they decided to make a swim for it to nearby rocks.

*Continued over.*

**Meet Coastguard heroes Alice and Thelma  
SAVING LIVES AT SEA**

**SEE  
INSIDE...**



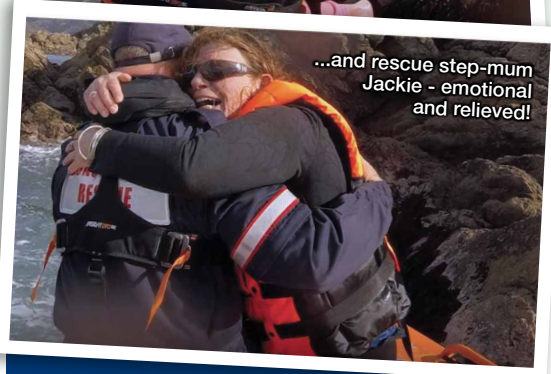
**Christmas will be a celebration for a family of four this year, all because of you.** (Continued)



The volunteers approach the stranded family...



...rescue six-year-old Summer



...and rescue step-mum Jackie - emotional and relieved!

They took one of the kids each and started the difficult swim. "Fighting the waves and fighting the current, it felt like we weren't getting anywhere, we were making very slow progress," recalled Jackie.

**During the swim, the couple lost sight of one another. They were terrified they had lost each other.** But to save the children they knew they had to reach the rocks as quickly as they could.

Wet, cold and exhausted, they eventually all made it to the rocks.

Unknown to the family, and thanks to a member of the public calling Police, a rescue effort was already underway involving Police, Coastguard and Surf Lifesaving.

Just as Damien was clambering onto the rocks to join the rest of his family, Jackie heard Coastguard Nelson volunteers motoring around the corner.

"We were very grateful to see them all. Very exhausted, very cold and very appreciative!"

Relief washed over them as their rescuers approached the rocks,

but the strong current and large waves made reaching the area difficult. To avoid crashing into the rocks the crew carefully timed their approach and eventually rescued the family, one by one. Knowing they were now safe, they jumped into the volunteers arms, weeping in relief. Last to be plucked to safety, Jackie wrapped volunteer Joe in a bear hug, thanking him and the crew for coming to their rescue.

As experienced boaties, Jackie and Damien made sure their whole family was wearing properly fitted lifejackets. They had even picked up a brand new lifejacket for Summer that morning. This decision saved her life with Coastguard Nelson volunteer Pete Kara saying the family wrote their own survival story.

After spending nearly two hours in the water, they were all hypothermic. Coastguard volunteers wrapped them in warm blankets for the trip back to shore where an ambulance was waiting to take them to hospital.

“  
We were **very grateful**  
to see the volunteers.  
**Very exhausted, very cold**  
and **very appreciative!**  
”

Survivor Jackie



Damien, Jackie, Rueben and Summer are alive and well thanks to you. Without you, Coastguard volunteers wouldn't have been there but you made sure they were. What a lifesaver, thank you!

# Thank you for saving lives at sea.

You make what we do possible!



## COVID-19 Medical Evacuations

Even in a pandemic our crews are rescue-ready and able to take to the water and the skies in an emergency. During lockdown Coastguard volunteers were involved in nine emergency responses, including six urgent medical transfers of confirmed and possible Covid-19 patients to hospital. As the pandemic continues, crews can form their 'crew bubbles' at a moment's notice so they can continue saving lives at sea.



## Capsized Kayaker

A Kayaker who capsized on the notorious Maketu bar in July was extremely lucky to make it home alive thanks to the speedy response of Coastguard Maketu volunteers. They pulled the man from the water in bad shape. "Another couple of minutes and I think it would have been a very different outcome," said Coastguard volunteer Shane Beech.



## Fighting fires at Lake Ōhau

In early October volunteers from Coastguard Mackenzie Lakes spent 12 gruelling hours in extreme conditions on Lake Ōhau providing support to helicopters battling the blaze which decimated the Ōhau village area. The wind was causing waves of up to four metres in some parts of the lake. "Our job was to be there in support of the helicopters dipping the monsoon buckets into the lake," said Coastguard volunteer, Dene Madden.



## Waka-Ama Rescue

An outgoing tide and freezing water could have meant a very different outcome for six waka ama paddlers if it wasn't for Coastguard Wanganui. In May, their waka ama was swamped by a wave on Whanganui River, tossing them from the boat. Dark and cold, the paddlers were in the water for about 30 minutes in 14 degree waters when Coastguard volunteers hauled them to safety. "Two of the paddlers were showing signs of hypothermia. They were lucky they weren't in there for any longer," said Coastguard volunteer, Garry Hawkins.

## Your support helps Coastguard volunteer, Thelma save lives - and look after our beautiful islands.

By nature Coastguard volunteers are an impressive bunch of people with an incredible capacity to help those in need.

**Thelma Wilson** from Coastguard Kawau is one of these and took out this year's Hutchwilco Volunteer of the Year Award.

Described by her peers as the "backbone of the unit," Thelma would give the shirt off her back to help anyone in need. Her team has often seen her not only giving her jumper, but beanie and towel to patients suffering from hypothermia.

Recently, Thelma also went above and beyond to help a foreign sailor. After hours of rescuing a stricken yacht off the rocks the day before, she revisited the scene the next day while the tide was out to retrieve and deliver some valuables to the sailor.



Thelma is extremely generous with her time and knowledge, passing this on to her fellow volunteers. She is a former Department of Conservation Senior Ranger and passionate about nature and wildlife. **She has recently helped get Kawau Rescue certified as the first "pest free" rescue boat in the Hauraki Gulf.**

**It's thanks to you that incredible Coastguard volunteers like Thelma have the right training and equipment to make such a lasting impact on their fellow volunteers and their communities. Thelma, like thousands of other volunteers around New Zealand can't save lives without you. You are part of the team making this happen, thank you!**

# Volunteer Q&A

## Meet Alice Rogan

Coastguard Wellington

Coastguard volunteers come from all walks of life and Wellingtonian Alice is one of these extraordinary people. Thanks to you, Alice is trained to save lives at sea.



### What is your role as a Coastguard volunteer?

I've been with Coastguard for over two years now. I'm part of the operational crew and I'm training with the senior squad.

### What do you do when you're not volunteering for Coastguard?

I'm already in the field of helping people working in the hospital as an emergency medicine doctor.

### What inspired you to volunteer for Coastguard?

I wanted to do something I had never done before. Growing up I was never around boats or even near water but being a doctor I had an interest in search and rescue. When I moved to Wellington I was driving past the Coastguard building and thought why not give it a go!

### Did anything surprise you about Coastguard when you became a volunteer?

I was so surprised at how many people are involved in Coastguard and how skilled they are. There's so much training

that goes into it which I never really appreciated and all done voluntarily. Even saving just one person or one boat involves so many skilled people who have given up their free time which is really quite humbling. It's a pleasure to be part of it.

### What has been your most memorable experience at Coastguard?

A memorable moment was a rescue I was involved in near the Red Rocks in Wellington. A mayday call came in for a diver who had gone missing. We were tasked by the police to search for him. Being involved in such a big team of emergency services and finding the diver alive was incredible. It's so rewarding being part of the moment when a life is saved.

### What would you say to someone thinking of joining Coastguard?

I really enjoy being part of Coastguard. You can really surprise yourself with what you can do when you put your mind to it. Go meet your local unit, introduce yourself and join in with one of the trial days. Give it a go, you might surprise yourself and I'm sure you'll learn something new.

“ Even saving just **one person** or **one boat** involves so many skilled people who have given up their free time which is really quite humbling. ”



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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