

A Lucky gift, and now Joshua is keen to help

By TAHLIA MCPHERSON, *Border News*, Jan. 26, 2015, midnight



ADF ex-serviceman Joshua New, pictured with his assistance dog Lucky, is keen to raise money and awareness for the Young Diggers Dog Squad program. Picture: DYLAN ROBINSON

A Border ex-serviceman who has been battling to escape the loneliness and post traumatic stress that followed deployment says he was saved by a “miracle” dog called Lucky.

After 10 years’ service in the Australian Defence Force and three tours of Afghanistan, Joshua New returned home to find he wasn’t coping.

He was medically discharged from the army in October last year and two months later he received an assistance dog through the Young Diggers Dog Squad program.

Mr New, who has since moved to Mount Beauty, now wants to help other defence members who are experiencing the physical and mental impacts of deployment.

With such a large defence population on the Border, he hopes the community will get behind the cause.

“You’re never alone when you have one of these dogs,” Mr New said.

“Lucky is never even two feet behind me no matter where I am; he is by my side 24/7.

“The moment he notices I’m not coping he can pick it up, it’s amazing.

“Two weeks ago I was in Lavington, it was the first time I had him and he picked up I was having a panic attack.

“I didn’t realise at the time but I should have listened to him, he was trying to pull me out of there and get me out of the shops.

“These are dogs that are in pounds, they are being saved as well, it’s not only helping us, but it saves them too.”

Young Diggers is an organisation that relies on donations and is currently in need of 300 dogs throughout Australia. It costs \$2500 to rescue and train each dog and Mr New said he personally wants to raise enough to train 15 dogs by the end of the year.

“It is all run by volunteers, most of them are ex-vets with physical or mental injury so 100 per cent of the money goes to dog training,” Mr New said.

“I have a lot of passion for this, I spent a lot of time with the co-founders and saw how much they were still struggling, it made me really want to help push to make it bigger and raise awareness.

“They have given me the gift of having Lucky so I just wanted to help them a bit.”

Businesses can have their brand displayed on a dog jacket by sponsoring a dog at defencebankfoundation.com.au/sponsoradog.

To help Mr New reach his target of \$37,500 people can donate at “The gift of Lucky” at mycause.com.au.

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