

Getting by with the help of friends and community

Fundraising success

By Jessica Willard

In the blink of an eye everything changed for Kurri's Andrew Hunt and his family.

In August last year Andrew sustained significant injuries in a dirt bike accident and several days after his release from hospital, suffered a stroke.

At the time his wife Lisa was six months pregnant with their third child and during Andrew's recovery in hospital, Lisa herself also spent more than a week in care after complications with her daughter Molly's birth.

Now, Lisa is Andrew's full time career and has had to take indefinite unpaid leave to help with his recovery.

"Nothing can prepare you for something like this," she said.

"The hardest thing was bringing Molly home from the hospital without Andrew.

"Our whole lives have changed now and it has been a massive adjustment for the kids.

"But everything gets put into perspective when you go through something like this and Molly has just been such a blessing on us.

"She puts a smile on our face and she has been a real motivator for Andrew in his recovery."

Since Andrew's stroke, a number of local businesses have made significant donations to help the family get by.

Mac Campbell, General Manager of local building company Valley Homes, was one of the first to pledge his support.

Valley Homes donated \$5000 at a recent fund raising event which was also supported by Star Realty, Austar Mine and Eraring Power amongst others.

"We were very moved by Andrew's story,"



■ UNITED: The Hunt family from left, Lisa: baby Molly, Sam, Andrew and Brittany.

Mr. Campbell said.

"We are also in the process of helping Andrew and his wife Lisa complete some necessary modifications to their home."

Now Andrew's former cycling club, the Kurri Mongrels, are on a mission to raise money and awareness for the Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI) to assist in stroke research and do their bit for a good friend.

In April the club held a five day mystery tour in honour of Andrew, riding their bikes more than 300 kilometres from the coast to Forster, Tea Gardens to Medowie then back through Raymond Terrace, Hinton, Morpeth and then returning to Kurri.

In June the group continued their fundraising efforts with a ride from Broome to Cape Leeuwin in Western Australia – the

most south-westerly point on mainland Australia.

Club spokesman, Martin Parker, said they are proud to be doing their bit to help out a mate.

"Andrew was an active member of the Kurri Mongrels," he said.

"He was very energetic, always up for a ride, be it on his motorbike or mountain bike."

"All of us have seen first-hand during 2012 just how quickly things can change if fate intervenes in our lives.

"We have seen how drastically a stroke can change a life but also how guts and determination can overcome obstacles."

Lisa said the family have been blown away by the support of the community.

Kurri's Mrs. Classic Australia winner, Carol Lanesbury is about to depart on the trip of a lifetime as part of the world titles for the Mrs. Australia Quest.

The quest promotes ovarian cancer awareness – and as an ovarian cancer survivor of seven years, Carol said she feels proud and privileged to wear the crown and be an ambassador for women across Australia.

Carol has been busy fundraising for the trip recently, raising more than \$8,000 through events and raffles. She said she has been blown away by the support and generosity of the entire community and would like to thank major sponsors East Cessnock Bowling Club, her husband Jim and daughters Amanda and Kristen.

"Every single person who has helped me on this journey – I just cannot thank enough," she said.

"When I first entered this quest it was to raise awareness, but it has just become so much more than that."

Carol will travel to the United States for the world titles on Sunday and while she is there, will visit cancer hospitals and children's refuges.

More information can be found at www.mrsaust-raliaquest.com.au.



■ CHARITY: Carol Lanesbury pictured at the recent High Teal fundraising event St. Paul's Anglican Church Hall.

What Women Want!

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Pink pens in the Ponce for Cessnock Lieutenant

Cessnock-raised Royal Australian Navy Lieutenant Alex Buchanan has gained a diverse collection of sea going experiences in her seven years in the navy and has become a competent and confident officer.

The 26-year-old's gender is not part of her military life – perhaps in part because it has been more than 30 years since the RAN opened their seagoing occupations to women.

Lt. Buchanan's sisters, Robyn Connolly and Kathryn Sykes, have also served in the navy, following in the footsteps of their father Sandy.

During a recent interview with an Arabian Gulf regional media outlet, Lt. Buchanan – with five women from the United States Navy and two from the Royal Canadian Navy – were asked what it is like to be a woman in their nation's navy.

When asked the question, she proudly responded: "I am a girly-girl. I even have pink pens and stationery," pulling out a pink pen with a flourish.

"But I get the job done," she stressed with a cheerful grin.

Lt. Buchanan has proved herself an adept maritime logistician on the USS Ponce, which operated in the Arabian Gulf for the second annual International Mine Counter Measures Exercise (IMCMEX 13) in May.

"The desire to serve one's country and the ability to make a significant contribution is not based on gender or ethnicity," said Royal Navy Captain Andrew Elvin, Deputy Commander of Task Force 522.

"In fact, the strength of any country's armed forces depends on the diversity of its members."

On board USS Ponce for IMCMEX 13, Lt. Buchanan coordinated transfer of essential materials and personnel by air and sea for Task Force 522, which includes 2000 participants speaking more than 10 different languages – most of whom are flying and sailing

within an operating area spanning more than 200 nautical miles.

"Lt. Buchanan quickly embedded herself in the multi-national staff onboard USS Ponce and immediately started to coordinate and deliver logistic support to the 16 ships, 10 dive teams and nine Unmanned Underwater Vehicle (UUV) teams from the 20 nations that make up the IMCMEX 13 MCM Task Force," Capt. Elvin said.

"Lt. Buchanan is a credit to the RAN and her country."

Joining the RAN in 2006 as a maritime logistics officer, Lt. Buchanan has spent four of her seven years in the RAN ashore at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA), and more than two years posted to a variety of sea-going platforms.

She presently serves with the Australian Mine Warfare and Clearance Diving Task Group in Sydney.

In June, she deployed in support of amphibious operations training in Townsville, Australia and this month will be off to the U.S. for the biennial Australian and United States exercise, Talisman Sabre.

The remainder of 2013 will continue to provide challenges and opportunities for the newly-married lieutenant.

In November, she will be off to the Solomon Islands for Operation Render Safe, a peace-time mission to find, identify and render safe World War II munitions in the South Pacific.

"My schedule for 2013 is not for the faint-hearted," Lt. Buchanan concludes.

"But it's all in a day's work for this girly-girl!"

Lt. Alex Buchanan proudly shows her pink pen in the Joint Operations Room in USS Ponce. Photo and story supplied by Lt(N) Peggy Kulmala (Royal Canadian Navy).



■ GIRL POWER: Cessnock raised Royak Australian Navy Lieutenant Alex Buchanan, proudly shows off her pink pen.

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