

ssafa news

FOR SUPPORTERS

AUTUMN 2016



THANK YOU

Thank you for supporting our Armed Forces, veterans and their families. As a SSAFA supporter, you help to make a huge difference in the lives of those who call on our help. On their behalf, thank you for your generosity and continued support.

In this issue of SSAFA News, some of those who have benefitted from your support

share their story. We hope you find their stories as inspirational as we have.

Again, thanks to you, others like you, and our dedicated volunteers, no one needs to face difficult times on their own.

With our best wishes.

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity

OUR FUNDRAISING PROMISE

You may have read stories in the media recently about charity fundraising. We want to reassure you that:

1. We respect and greatly appreciate our supporters and always will
2. We never sell or swap your details
3. We value our supporters privacy and carry out their wishes
4. You can change how and when you want to hear from us at any time
5. We follow the strict code of conduct set out by the Fundraising Standards Board

To read our full fundraising promise to our supporters, please visit ssafa.org.uk or write to us at the address opposite and we will send you a copy.

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Registered Charity
No. 210760 Est. 1885
Registered Charity (Scotland)
No. SC038056
Est. 1885

Cover: James Wilkinson

BATTLE OF THE SOMME REMEMBERED

At exactly 7.30am on 1 July, 2016—100 years to the minute since the whistle was blown announcing the beginning of battle for soldiers at the Battle of the Somme – a commemorative art installation was unveiled in Northernhay Gardens in Exeter, Devon.

The project was conceived by artist Rob Heard and folk singer Steve Knightley of the band Show of Hands. It consisted of 19,240 hand-stitched shrouded figures laid out in the garden – one for each serviceman who gave his life on that fateful first day of battle that has been described as the worst in British military history.

Rob began making the shrouded figures in December of 2015. The Fallen section of the project includes a record for each man who died at The Somme in 1916. Rob and his team are asking the nation to contribute photos and memories of relatives, friends and community members in order to create a lasting legacy of those who lost their lives and

to help assemble the most comprehensive and detailed database of all who died at the Battle of the Somme, to be located on the project's website.

The shrouded figures are available for purchase, either framed or unframed, allowing the public to own a piece of this unique and memorable project. A portion of the proceeds from the sales of the figures will be donated to SSAFA, which has been providing support for the Armed Forces and their families since World War One until today.

For more information on this poignant tribute, visit thesomme19240.co.uk

A SPECIAL BOND

James Wilkinson, 30, from North Yorkshire, was a Lance Corporal with the Royal Army Veterinary Corps when he was critically injured in an IED explosion while on patrol with a dog during his third tour in Afghanistan.

“On June 16, 2011 at 6:30am I was on foot patrol, working the dog, going through open fields and ditches. Suddenly there was a blast from the bottom of the bank. It hit six of us, the sergeant and me most critically.

“By 7:10 I was in surgery at Camp Bastion. I wouldn’t be here now if they hadn’t got me out so quickly. Shrapnel had severed the main vein and artery in my left leg, and my abdomen and hip had been compromised.

“My dog was fine fortunately. The guys were able to get him back to the compound. Out there you are one-on-one with the dogs, so you get a really close bond and a good working relationship with them.

“After surgery, I was in a coma for about a week and a half. From what I’ve been

told, they flew me out the following evening, and I was back in the UK at Queen Elizabeth Hospital on June 17.

“I started my rehab in August and wasn’t discharged until July 2014, so it was a long time. I stayed at SSAFA’s Norton Homes a few times, both the one at Selly Oak and the one at Headley Court.

“Headley Court is a four-and-a-half-hour trip from home, and when I wasn’t so mobile it was a long journey for me. Having the Norton House there meant my family could come down and visit me, which made a huge difference.

“I knew my Army career was coming to an end, and I had an idea of what I wanted to do, thanks to all the rehab I’d been through. I’d had a lot of hydrotherapy and knew how good it



was. My partner is a veterinary nurse so we thought, why not do something similar for dogs?

“We started in September 2014 and had 10 dogs swimming our first year. The second year we were up to 40-45 dogs a week, which is great.

“I still have bad back pain daily, but that’s just part of life now. I also need a new hip every 10 to 15 years, but other than that, I’m as good as I’m going to get.”

673 

personnel and family members supported by Norton Homes in 2015

The Norton Homes provide injured service personnel and their families, a home-from-home whilst receiving treatment or rehabilitation, at no cost to them.



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starting from just
£3.50



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Armed Forces
charity

Lifelong support for our Forces and their families



FIGHTING IN SSAFA'S CORNER

In eight weeks Zoe went from beginner to boxing champ to raise funds in memory of her father, WO2 Sergeant Major Peter.



“Dad served for 29 years in Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Gambia and Germany. As an army family, we were always aware of the vital support that SSAFA provides to serving and veteran soldiers.

I remember the fantastic practical and financial assistance SSAFA gave to the family of my dad's corporal who was killed in a training exercise, leaving behind a wife and young family.

“When dad passed away unexpectedly in 2014, we chose a memorial collection for SSAFA instead of flowers. It's nice to know that money you raise goes directly to helping someone who has put his or her life on the line for our country.

“I wanted to do something challenging - something that reflected, albeit only a fraction, of the challenge and courage required by our Forces on a daily basis. I chose boxing because dad always loved to watch Army boxing.

“I was a complete beginner so I joined Pink Collar Boxing. They specialise in training novices to fight

on behalf of charity. I did an intensive training course, culminating in a three-round amateur match.

“I'd never hit anyone in my life, so the reality of punching someone in the face was difficult to overcome, but it was such an incredible work out.

“Match day was incredible. I had so much support for my fundraising with my friends and family cheering me on. It turned out my opponent didn't get the note about it being a charity match. She landed a massive punch in the first round, breaking my nose and nearly knocking out a tooth! Being in that ring for three rounds felt like eternity, but I knew dad would have been proud of my courage to stand strong and fight to the end.

“I miss my dad so much. It's a comfort to know that raising money in his memory goes directly to helping another family like mine.”

To get in the ring with Pink Collar Boxing visit: pinkcollarboxing.co.uk

HELP IN UNEXPECTED WAYS

Viki, who lives at RAF Leeming, suffered from pre-natal depression prior to the birth of her second son. She reached out to SSAFA and found support she didn't know was there.

"I'd never heard of pre-natal depression until I started googling things and realised it sounded like what I was going through. From about four weeks into my second pregnancy I started feeling really ill, and it was affecting my relationship with my three-year-old son. By the time I was six months pregnant I didn't know how I could carry on."

"I originally went to SSAFA to see if they could arrange for my husband to come home from a course because I was struggling. While I was there, I found out that they could help me.

"I started seeing Andrea, a SSAFA Social Work Practitioner. She helped me understand what was going on. I didn't want to leave the house any more. I was literally worrying about everything, including the upcoming birth because my previous experience had been traumatic. I couldn't get up to get my son's breakfast and even struggled to get him to nursery just across the road.

"Andrea wrote to my consultant explaining that I needed them to listen to me and gave me a gentle push to help me speak up for myself at

appointments. She spoke to the doctor and took away a lot of the stress I was feeling. I saw her for about three months, right up until I had my baby. She made sure I knew that she would be there to support me after I gave birth if I needed it. She even spoke to my husband when I was worried about what he must be thinking. She helped me explain to him how I was feeling.

"At the time I didn't tell anybody what I was going through. I didn't want to talk to friends because it felt like all anybody wanted to talk about was my pregnancy. Nobody could tell how I was feeling.

"Through it all I always felt that as soon as the baby was born I would be fine and in reality I was. But even after I came home, Andrea called to make sure everything was okay.

"Andrea helped take away some of my worries and got me to the end of my pregnancy. She was amazing. If I hadn't called into the SSAFA office that day I wouldn't have had the help I needed. I hope that if I talk about what happened to me someone else might realise they can go and get help, too. SSAFA is such a great charity."

37

children attended
a short respite break
in 2015

SHORT BREAKS FOR YOUNG CARERS

SSAFA offers young carers aged eight to 12 who have a sibling or parent with additional needs and/or disabilities week-long residential breaks. Children are supported and supervised by staff and volunteers during a week of adventure, new friends, confidence building and fun!

“We’re the Eustace family. I’m Steph, full-time carer to my son Harvey and studying for my Special Educational Needs advanced diploma. My husband Mark has been serving for 10 years as an Aircraft Technician at RAF Coningsby. Our daughter Felicity is nine; Harvey, six.

“Harvey has autism, ADHD and epilepsy. He struggles with his behaviour and has violent outbursts, which are sometimes directed at Felicity and myself. Felicity is amazing with Harvey. She sees only the best in

him, even when he’s having a really bad day.

“Last year we heard about the SSAFA Siblings Breaks from our local branch. I thought what an amazing opportunity it would be for Felicity to have a break, make friends who are in the same boat and have fun.

“Felicity enjoyed it so much, especially the abseiling. She was scared but, with some encouragement, did it and is so proud of herself. So are we! Her short break has given her lots of confidence,

independence and many stories about her adventures. The volunteers were absolutely amazing and really supported her.

“Whilst she was away, we were able to have quality one-to-one time with Harvey. Upon Felicity’s return, everybody felt refreshed. We loved going to pick her up and seeing how happy she was. She can’t wait to fill out the forms for next year’s short break.”

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If you would like to volunteer at one of the SSAFA short breaks for service children in 2017, please email Hannah.w@ssafa.org.uk





MOTHER AND SON EPIC CHARITY RIDE

In June, mother and son team Tracey and Luke Blake from Portsmouth, cycled over 200 miles for charity on specially designed disability trikes accompanied by their assistance dog Chewbacca.

The trio, who call themselves the 'P2P Trikers', departed from HMS Drake in Plymouth on Monday, 20 June, and arrived at The Maritime Club in Portsmouth on Saturday, 2 July. They rode for 11 days, including a well-deserved three-night rest at Bovington.

Tracey, a former member of the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS), damaged her neck in an accident whilst serving and has battled limited and debilitating neck movement and severe headaches ever since. Her son Luke, 18, is autistic.

Tracey, who volunteers for SSAFA's Portsmouth Division, said: "It was a long ride, but with my son and Chewie by my side, we made it. Because my work supporting the veteran and serving community in the local area is so rewarding, I wanted to do this ride for them so the good work can continue." The P2P Trikers raised over £2,400 to support SSAFA's work and other military charities.

SSAFA volunteer caseworkers like Tracey support members of our Armed Forces community in a range of ways, including visiting them in their homes; assessing their needs; supporting injured servicemen and women; unemployed veterans struggling to transition from military to civilian life; befriending lonely, elderly veterans; and providing much-needed company and support for those with issues such as homelessness, marriage breakdown, debt and mental health problems.



1,431,250

volunteering hours donated
by branch and committee
volunteers in 2015



BLANDFORD RALLIES TO AID FIJI

In February 2016, Cyclone Winston – one of the worst storms to hit the Pacific region with winds clocked at up to 200 miles per hour – devastated the Fiji Islands.

At least 20 people were killed and thousands more were left homeless, without power, lacking water and cut off from communication. Entire villages in this tropical paradise were flattened.

Blandford Garrison is home to 11 Fijian families, all of whom had relatives back in Fiji who had been directly affected by the ferocious storm. Members of the community decided to approach SSAFA's Blandford Garrison In-Service Committee for assistance.

The Committee unanimously contributed to the relief efforts. Collection points were set up that provided informative videos for donors about the extent of the damage caused by the cyclone and how their donations would be put to good use. Soon tents, clothes, toys, equipment and bedding started flooding in.

Three members of Blandford's Fijian community flew to Fiji to meet the container ship when it arrived in port. Their goal was to ensure that the contents of the container were not inadvertently included in the main relief effort and, instead, made their way specifically to the families and relatives of those Fijians who were living in Blandford.

Whilst the relief distribution was continuing in Fiji, back in Blandford others of the Fijian community were also volunteering and fundraising. A total of £1,241.75 was raised and presented to SSAFA as an expression of thanks for the much-appreciated assistance and support extended to the relatives and families of the Fijian community based in Blandford.



SISTERS WITH GRATITUDE

Margaret Adams was so grateful for the support SSAFA had given to her younger sister that she left SSAFA a legacy in her Will when she died in 2014. Her sister explains why.

“My sister Margaret was 11 when I was born and left home when she was 15 to join the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), even though she was too young.

“She was in for the duration of the war. When she came out, she got engaged and eventually married. She did a teacher training course for people leaving the services at Aberystwyth University. I think her experience in WAAF really made her who she was and definitely stayed with her.

“Unfortunately, I had a difficult marriage and left my husband when both my children were very young to come back to England from Germany. He didn't

support me so I applied to SSAFA a couple of times for help.

They were very generous. I remember talking to my sister about the support I'd received, and she told me that she intended to leave a gift in her Will to SSAFA because of how they'd saved me.

“A few years ago I got into financial difficulty and had to leave my home, but the SSAFA office in Fulham saved my life again! They were wonderful. My sister was very grateful. For her to leave a gift to SSAFA was a lovely gesture. Doing something on someone else's behalf is a wonderful thing. Now I intend to leave a gift in my Will to SSAFA myself. They really saved my life.”

LIFETIME GIFT

TWO EXPLOSIONS. 14 DAYS IN A COMA. 27 INJURIES.

For Royal Marine Andy Grant, putting his body on the line was just part of fulfilling his duty. One trip wire in Helmand Province tore his body apart in seconds, and 18 months of intensive rehabilitation followed.

SSAFA is only able to support veterans like Andy because enough people believed his service meant something. Tomorrow our Forces will need our support again, and you can be there to answer their call.

Your legacy will serve those who served.

**FOR YOUR FREE GUIDE TO SUPPORTING
OUR VETERANS CALL 020 7463 9257
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