

INSPIRE

MAGAZINE



Can
Too

AUTUMN 2019



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Welcome to the newly named Inspire Magazine

Chief Executive Officer, Peter McLean shares why we choose this name, the edition's theme, latest news and more.



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Can Too Calendar

Pick a goal you never thought possible or find your next Can Too challenge and help us beat cancer, from the Blackmores Bridge Run to a trek in Iceland.



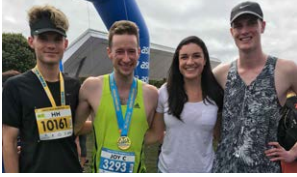
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Be inspired by those who demonstrated the Can Too spirit to conquer Mount Kilimanjaro with an elevation of 5,895 metres to raise nearly \$35,000.



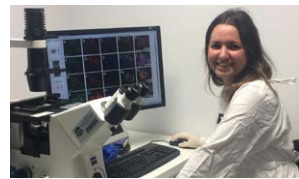
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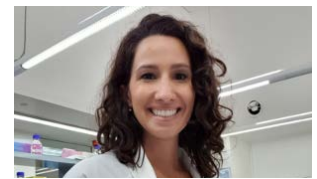
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My letter to 14-year-old me

Three-time Olympian, Athletics Coach and Can Too participant Melinda Gainsford-Taylor AM, writes a letter to her younger self.



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Farewell to Mark Ellis

Mark Ellis struggled to walk so he swam vast distances, to help others.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

What content would you like to see? Please contact us if you have a story you'd like to share, an idea for a section or a Book Club recommendation.

If your book recommendation is featured in the next edition, you'll win *The Annie Effect* – founder Annie Crawford's biography (Read more about Annie's book on page 25).



WELCOME TO INSPIRE MAGAZINE



I'm pleased to announce that our Can Too magazine's name is *Inspire*. Congratulations to our community members Carolyn Kearney and Megan Taslaman who will both win a pair of shoes from Brooks Running for coming up with the name for our quarterly digital publication.

We chose this title for the magazine as it is Can Too's mission to inspire people, to help them realise they Can Too reach goals they never thought possible.

The theme of the Autumn 2019 edition of *Inspire* is 'family'. Often people describe Can Too as like a family and members refer to their pod as their 'Can Too family'.

See page 6 to see why the 'Inner West is Best' crew love their pod family. You can join our 'I Love My Pod' campaign by sharing images with #ilovemypod. Stay tuned on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/CanTooRunSwim/ for details.

It's great to see so many family members connecting through Can Too and how our community provides support and encouragement to each other through the highs and lows to reach a shared goal, be that to finish an ocean swim, climb to the top of a mountain, run a marathon or to raise funds to help cure cancer through research and prevention.

Read on to page 10 to see how Can Too has been like an extended family providing love and support to Craig Dwyer and his sons after the passing of their wife and mother Natalie.

Our fundraising stars on page 22 share how their family and friends made their special event a success.

I'm also looking forward to our community coming together at the Art of Seafood, our new annual gala in support of the Can Too Foundation's cancer research and prevention programs.

Be inspired by the image on page 16 of our group of Can Tooers who trekked for 120 kilometres over five days and climbed 5,895 metres above sea level to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro to raise over \$35,000.

Check out the diary section on page 4 for other challenges coming up including a trek to Kakadu National Park, and to celebrate our 15th year with the Blackmores Running Festival your race entry is now included.

I was also pleased to see the success of our four new training pods reaching their goals to complete the RunWest Fun Run - Western Sydney's first major running festival. See why Peter Signorelli took on the event on page 5.

Congratulations to cancer researcher Dr Angelica Merlot who was named NSW Young Woman of the Year. See the latest researchers we're investing in this year on page 24.

We sadly farewelled a member of our Can Too family Mark Ellis recently and will name the Mana Fiji 10km Marathon Swim training pod in his honour. See Mark's inspiring life story on page 30.

I look forward to visiting many of our pods or families in upcoming training sessions and events.

See you around in orange,

Peter McLean
Chief Executive Officer | Can Too Foundation

CAN TOO TRAINING PROGRAMS



BLACKMORES MARATHON

1 May – 15 September
Greater Sydney



BLACKMORES HALF MARATHON

12 June – 15 September
Greater Sydney



BLACKMORES 10KM BRIDGE RUN

10 July – 15 September
Greater Sydney



NEW YORK MARATHON

19 June – 3 November
Sydney



SUNSHINE COAST HALF MARATHON

1 May – 4 August
Brisbane, Gold Coast



SUNSHINE COAST 10KM RUN

29 May – 4 August
Brisbane, Gold Coast



BILPIN BUSH RUN

21 May – 24 August
Sydney



MANA FIJI 10KM MARATHON

11 Jul – 15 Oct
Sydney



WIN BROOKS SHOES IN EVERY PROGRAM!

HUMA CHARITY CHALLENGES



TREK, KAYAK & CYCLE TASMANIA

w/ Annie Reidy
Tasmania



TREK KAKADU

w/ Edith Hurt
Northern Territory



TREK THE CAMINO TRAIL

w/ Annie Crawford
Spain



TREK THE CAPE TO CAPE TRACK

Western Australia



TREK ICELAND

Iceland

VIEW THE FULL TRIP CALENDAR HERE



PETER RAN WEST FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T

When Peter Signorelli's wife Awhina asked him to do a 9km fun run, his response was: 'you're kidding me, I'm lucky if I can run from the car to the front door if it's raining'.

Despite never running before he became a Can Too devotee.

"Running's hard but in the back of my mind I'm helping find a cure for cancer."

"After doing a long run you feel better in half an hour, a person in chemo doesn't, I run for the people that can't."

His running achievements started with the Blackmores 9km Bridge Run in 2012, along the road he's picked up participation medals in 14km races, half and full marathons and most recently the 12km RunWest Fun Run.

"I'm not built to be a runner, I'm not tall and slender but if I can do it anyone can.

"The elation of getting over a marathon's finish line is the best feeling ever, besides getting married and

seeing my kids being born," he said.

He credits the supportive Can Too environment for his achievements.

"Everyone helps each other out, you're breaking through fears and barriers together and helping find a cure for cancer. You've all wearing orange and are part of the Can Too family."

Peter was also joined by 28 fellow Can Tooers who completed the RunWest 10-week training program in four training groups across Greater Western Sydney. They raised almost \$17,000 for Can Too to benefit cancer research and prevention.

About another 70 Can Tooers also completed the run as a practice event for the SMH Half Marathon.

"The best thing about RunWest was running in the zoo. I loved the course," said Peter.

He dedicated the run to his late grandfather Jim 'or in Italian Nonno Jim' who passed away from lung cancer.

INNER WEST IS BEST



A group of people calling themselves a 'pod' that meet early mornings in an Inner West, Sydney park twice a week wearing bright orange may seem like strange cultish behaviour.

They are however devoted to running long distances to raise money for the Can Too Foundation, which benefits their health and others by funding cancer research and prevention.

The training group, coined the 'Inner West is Best' (IWIB) pod, is a family affair with, Can Too Life Members, husband and wife team David Head (Team Captain) and Sharon Head (Mentor) leading the charge.

Sharon, who is also the Foundation's Program and Fundraising Coordinator, is currently doing her 11th program, the SMH Half Marathon. Before joining Can Too in 2013 she hadn't run before. She was inspired to join by her sister Kathy Warne, who raised more than \$20,000 over 14 programs.

"The pod becomes a family with so many people that keep coming back," says Sharon.

"It doesn't matter your age, income, how fast or fit you are, everyone's there for the same reason."

Many of the group have lost family members to cancer including an aunt with two small children, a father, a sister and grandfather.

Official projections showed that more than 46,000 people in NSW were told they had cancer last year, which shows more than ever the importance for funding cancer research and prevention.

The pod's fundraising methods includes selling Can Too branded socks and hoodies, hosting high teas, cake stalls, cocktail and trivia nights, dinner parties, Bunnings BBQs, yoga sessions and bread with jam post training sessions.

Steffi Dourado who is doing her second program says the pod 'feels like my running family'.

"Everyone's so friendly that it makes you want to wake up early every Wednesday and Saturday morning for training. And they're all running for something," says Steffi.

Therri Ellison says that the pod is like a family to her as well.

"My inner west family helps me achieve my goals but they also give me support and encouragement when times are tough and praise and admiration when times are good," said Therri.

IWIB member Barbara Addison loves the Inner West location for their running routes, which start from King George's Park, Rozelle.

2018 projections showed the Inner West population had the following number of cancer cases by disease*:



123
breast cancer



93
lung cancer



112
bowel cancer



69
Melanoma

* The data is compiled by Cancer Institute NSW.

"We're lucky where we are that we can run from the city along the water," says Barbara.

She admired a friend's achievements who was taking part in Can Too, thinking that she could never do that.

"My friend said 'yes you can' and it stuck in my head, so I put my name down, at first I thought what did I sign up for?"

After her sister passed away at 54 from Non-Hodgkin lymphoma she found her fellow IWIB pod runners to be so supportive.

"They said 'lets run for her', you are not on your own when they support you which is wonderful.

"I'm so grateful that I can run, my message is that you can do it too. The 14-week program builds you up to do a half marathon... if you've always been a runner or have had no athletic background."

New pod member, Razvan Popescu didn't know what to expect with the training group and how he would go running longer distances.

"David and the team are very helpful including the coach Mike Engelsman who provides a structured and welcoming environment and helps with injury prevention too," said Razvan.

Tiffany Payton's 'Tip', who is doing her 3rd IWIB half marathon program, running times have jumped from completing a half marathon in just over 2 hrs to 1 hr 51 minutes. Her goal time for the 2019 SMH half is 1 hr 40 minutes.

"A lot of people in my family have had or passed away from cancer, even as recently as a couple of months ago, it's close to home, so if I'm going to raise money for a cause then this is the one," says Tiffany.



Since Can Too became a Foundation in October 2014 the Inner West Pod has:

- Raised \$260,000
- Funded 2 cancer researchers
- Trained 226 people aged from 19 to 65, for half marathons, relays + 10km runs
- Run approximately 4,130kms on race days
- Drunk approximately 2,500 coffees at Copo Cafe

"I really love the community in the IWIB pod it's good motivation to be with people you know and are comfortable with."

Team Captain David Head says that the IWIB pod is always such a low maintenance group.

"People are happy to turn up to training, catch up with old and new friends, and get out on the track or the road. This makes my job as Team Captain very easy. I love seeing the changes in people from their first trepidation, then gaining confidence in their running ability and then completing their goal event. The IWIB pod is great at celebrating people's progress and achievements. That's why Inner West is best!"



Please share why you love your pod on our Can Too Run and Swim Facebook page!



COACH SPOTLIGHT

MATT JOYCE

TRAINS CAN TOOERS AT: Macquarie Uni Pod

DAY JOB: State Teams and Events Manager – Athletics NSW

LIVES: Macquarie Park

AGE: 29

WHY RUNNING?

- Physical benefits: improved cardiovascular fitness, lower heart rate plus strong and healthy appearance.
- Mental benefits: improved self-confidence, decreased stress and anxiety and ability to deal with challenges in life.
- Social benefits: meeting amazing people who have become lifelong friends.

WHY CAN TOO?

- It's fun, friendly and feels like one big family!
- Fundraising for a great cause
- Love the colour orange
- Seeing people achieve the impossible
- Infectious spirit and camaraderie of the Mighty Mac Pod – best pod of them all.

FAVOURITE CAN TOO MOMENT: Watching anyone complete and accomplish running a half marathon for the first time is very special. Seeing massive improvements in individuals is also so awesome to see from program to program. I had one runner complete her first half marathon in September 2017 in a time of 2.30 – eight months later she completed her second half in May 2018 in a time of 2.11, a massive 19-minute improvement in just eight months.

I'M LISTENING TO: Beyoncé, Bruno Mars and James Morrison.

FAVOURITE FILM: *Without Limits* which follows the relationship between record-breaking distance runner Steve Prefontaine and his coach Bill Bowerman.

WHAT I EAT PRE-RACE: watermelon and a muesli bar.

GO TO MEAL POST-RACE: chocolate milk and stir fry chicken with veggies and rice.

TALENT I WISH I HAD: to fly

PERFECT WEEKEND: Can Too training on Saturday morning then compete in a fun run in the afternoon. A long run Sunday morning and that evening spending time with friends/family and having a good feed mixed with a game of backyard cricket and Uno.

MY LATEST TRAVEL ADVENTURE: check out Matt's trip to Iten, Kenya on Can Too's news blog: www.cantoo.org.au/blog/i-can-too-run-with-kenyans

HOW YOU CAN TOO RUN YOUR BEST 10 KILOMETRE RACE



- **Run with fellow Can Tooers**, friends and families to make the training easier.
- **Increase time on your feet** by increasing approx. 10 per cent each week i.e. week 1 walk/run 30mins – next week walk/run 35mins. Increase the running component of exercise each time you run until you reach approx. 60-70mins.
- **3 running sessions a week** – include one interval session (e.g. 4 x 1km at 10km race pace with 2 mins rest in between), an easy run and a long run and run every 2nd day.
- **Build up running training mileage slowly** and alternate walking/running for the first couple of weeks if you are new to running.
- **Cross training** such as Pilates, swimming, yoga and cycling will also help increase cardiovascular fitness and strength to assist your running performance.
- **Drink plenty of water, eat a balanced diet** of vegetables, fruit, low GI carbohydrates as well as lean meats and low-fat dairy to remain well fuelled and healthy.

TIPS ON HOW TO RECOVER

1. Hydration

It's important to recover the sweat, carbohydrates and salts you've lost with water and electrolytes, such as Hydralite which are supplied post races.

2. Nutrition

Within the hour post-race try and consume some carbohydrate and protein to help with muscle repair. And have a proper meal with adequate protein and carbohydrates, within 3 to 4 hours to further boost recovery and drink plenty of water.

3. Sleep

It is important for recovery 7-9 hours if possible.

4. Ice and cooling

There's some evidence to show that cold water or ice on the legs reduces inflammation, aids recovery, within 24 hours. You can do this by submerging into waist deep water at the beach or taking a cold bath. However, be careful with

severe temperatures, you risk hypothermia if it's 0°, so take caution. Another method is taking a shower with warm then cold water alternating for a minute each.

5. Stretching

Stretching tight muscles is beneficial, you can use a roller the day of the race and the next morning, often at events you'll see recovery stations where you can stretch and do yoga.

6. Compression

Wearing compression tights post-race and even to bed to help reduce inflammation and muscle soreness.

7. Massage

Get a massage 24 to 48 hours post-race, at events often they have massages available to kick start the recovery process.

ORANGE IS THICKER THAN WATER

CRAIG DWYER



Craig Dwyer found the support he received from Can Too to like being welcomed into a family.

"I will always be grateful to my extended Can Too family."

Craig Dwyer and his wife Natalie started a learn to ocean swim program in 2013. Just five weeks later Natalie was diagnosed with a rare and incurable form of cancer.

"I can still remember where I was when I got the shocking news. I rushed from work to meet her with the GP and within 24 hours we were in front of the gastrointestinal surgeon," said Craig.

"She unfortunately had to withdraw from the program after five weeks, but before that she was swimming multiple laps in the pool and in the ocean out past the breaks."

This was a major achievement as Natalie's goal was to overcome her fear of ocean swimming and, before Can Too, she had trouble swimming 50 metres.

"Mentor, Jodi Vallak and Team Captain, Ian Bond were incredible, Natalie loved both of them for helping her achieve these goals." (They're pictured with Natalie in the centre, next page, top row, middle image.)

The couple both reached their fundraising goals and Natalie was on the beach to cheer Craig on for

completing his first ocean swim – the iconic 2014 'Big Swim' from Palm Beach to Whale Beach.

"She was waiting on the beach only six weeks after major surgery. Despite the brave face and beautiful smile Natalie was unwell. She was back in hospital days later to get her pain under control and start aggressive chemo.

"Natalie was given six to 12 months after her diagnosis. Our reasons for taking part in Can Too then changed considerably.

"I never realised how significant Can Too would be, how important it was to have an outlet, away from our life which was all about cancer and searching for treatments. Can Too helped me to not just stay physically fit but mentally strong. We lived by a mantra we adopted with our Can Too program – 'just keep swimming'".

Natalie ended up being gifted nearly five years due to the brilliance of people working to find a cure and making the lives of cancer patients better, such as Prof David Thomas at the Garvan Institute, who has been funded by Can Too. Natalie took part in Prof Thomas' genetic sequencing program and immunotherapy drug trial.

"It resonates with me how Can Too's fundraising goes to causes close to her heart. They're still looking for answers to Natalie's type of cancer – Leiomyosarcoma. Without research there isn't much hope."

Sadly, Natalie lost her long battle with cancer on 27 August 2018.



"Since losing my mum to cancer my swimming buddies have become my Australian family." Kim Cook

CAN TOO FAMILY ALBUM

"It was Natalie's wish for me to continue with Can Too. She knew how important it was for me to raise awareness and support of cancer research, and for my own health and wellbeing."

Their sons Brad and Mitch have also taken part in Can Too. Brad swam alongside his dad and – with Mitch watching – Craig completed the 2019 Big Swim, six months to the day after his wife passed, on what would have been their 28th wedding anniversary.

"It was a tough day but good to have my boys there supporting me."

Brad Dwyer said that his 'Mighty South Pod' Can Too group offered him a level of support he wouldn't have found elsewhere.

When his mother was diagnosed with cancer Mitch said that he felt so helpless and Can Too was a way for him to help and show support to mum and dad.

"Can Too seemed like an effortless journey with my dad by my side. He has always been a pillar of strength and support all through my upbringing and especially through the last five years," said Mitch.

Craig said that he's not sure what he would have done particularly this year without the swim program and 'my amazing Can Too (mighty) South Pod family'.

"I love every one of them for how they've helped me, probably without even realising, a smile or hello before training, an encouraging cheer, a chat as we walked down the beach or a laugh as we caught our breath between pool sets. And the amazing messages of support from my pod and many others in the Can Too family.

"So far between myself and my sons we've proudly raised over \$21,000 for Can Too and we will continue to raise funds in Natalie's honour. I'm planning to start a pod at Campbelltown, where I live, next season in memory of Natalie."

Chloe Hurt seemed destined to be part of Can Too as she had a promising pedigree. Her mother Edith has been involved with the organisation for ten years, as a participant, Mentor and Board Director. Whilst they both like to give back to Can Too, Chloe relishes in giving one on one support whilst Edith helps shape the bigger picture.

YOU CAN TWO
EDITH & CHLOE

CHLOE

Mum first brought me into Can Too as an Energy Champion, when I was under 18. Then I did my first program, the half marathon and she did the full marathon; we'd see each other at track and she'd encourage me.

Neither of us were runners before Can Too, now we both love it. When we did our first half marathon program together, we were about the same speed and trained and raced together. We had time to chat which you don't always get in normal life, when it's an 18km training run that's two hours of chatting. And it's really nice to see her interact with and support other people.

She's supported me by helping me get to my events when I wasn't really motivated, she'd say 'come on love we're going to the track, let's get out the door'. It's great to have a buddy for accountability and support for training. She even gives me snacks, such as apples, when I've got places to go – and I'm 23.

Mum loves being able to make a difference in the work that she does, including research program manager for Cure Cancer Australia.



She has a love for cancer research and being able to help people with her work and volunteering outside of work. She likes being fit and healthy and having a good community she found all that with Can Too.

With her Can Too experiences as a fundraiser, training for events and being on the board, its set up an amazing path for her to contribute in so many ways. She has this whole world of cancer research that's opened up to her, she now manages a team of researchers at the Children's Medical Research Institute.

We have done a couple of Can Too fundraising events together including cocktails at sunset at our house and she's spent hours in the kitchen helping me to make many jars of jam for my fundraising. I now work for Médecins Sans Frontières Australia in the fundraising department as a supporter relations officer. Can Too has helped me to work at the NFP.

I love the mentorship role, she takes that on too, but I love being able to support and encourage people in the pod; that's where I fall to naturally, where mum really wants to make a big difference. She is big picture and loves to make changes for people on a wider scale. It comes from the same place but is shown differently with our personalities.

For me to be able to run alongside somebody, to encourage them through the whole program and get them to the finish line at the end of the event, that is what I absolutely love and strive for. Recently I swam with someone doing their first ocean swim and helping them to get over the line and support them in that way is what is fulfilling for me. For mum it's making decisions on the Board and making a long arching goal to make long standing change.

I think all those pieces are important, for people who are able to support individuals but also to be able to make a change in the big picture as well.

EDITH

It's terrific to do Can Too with my daughter. She'd watched me go to training for years and saw how happy it made me, what friends I'd made and she had supported me at events. As soon as Chloe was old enough and interested, she joined a program with me and really enjoyed it.

There was a couple of families doing that SMH Half Marathon, some mums and daughters and Paul Jeffress and his daughter, so it made a nice combo. I didn't get to run that much with her because she was faster than me but that was OK. She did drag me across the finish line: we did a sprint finish with hands raised so that was pretty special.

Can Too has strengthened our relationship in some respects, as we travel together to training if we can, but she's got her own Can Too world as well and we live our own lives.

We don't always run together but we always go to breakfast afterwards. This is the thing about Can Too, you have terrific people in your pod regardless if they're family members or not. Whether you're running at a different speed you still get that social element. Can Too is like a family: we help each other achieve goals that we never thought possible and along the way share wonderful experiences and create lifelong bonds.

Chloe's involved in the organisational side of another charity which gives us that common bond, as we understand that side as well as participating as volunteers and fundraisers.

I used to work as a consultant to Beyond Blue and when I did my first program in 2009 I recognised how fantastic Can Too is for mental health. It combines a goal event with a structured program, fitness, health and a sense of community, which are all important for mental health and wellbeing. I continue to regularly do programs for both the physical and mental health aspects, the sense of community and friendship, for me it's an unbeatable package.

I got involved as a Can Too board member when we created the Foundation because I had experience as a management consultant in cancer research funding and administration, and being a long-term participant meant that I understood the mechanics.

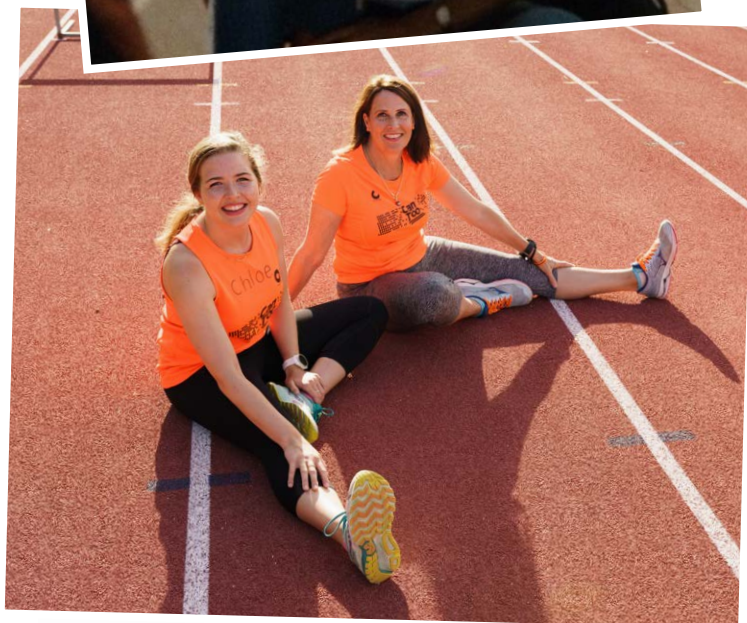
Cancer research is so important because so much research goes unfunded. The government is only funding about 12 per cent of eligible research so Can Too participants - whether they're running, swimming, cycling, trail running or hiking - are raising vital funds.

When cancer researchers speak at local training groups they thank us for running, and we say 'no, thank you for curing cancer', it's just a really beautiful circle of inspiration because both sides appreciate each other.

I'm at the Children's Medical Research Institute as Operations Manager for 'ProCan' a \$50 million project and I'm really inspired by the hard work and innovation that the cancer researchers display.

The tables have turned with Chloe, as I introduced her to Can Too, she's a good runner but is an excellent swimmer. She's done some swimming programs on her own and has her own Can Too friends.

It makes me proud to see her, with Can Too, go from a 16 to a 23-year-old living a life working in community affairs and being such a strong part of the Can Too community.





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www.cantoo.org.au/blackmores

10

inspiring trekkers
including ambassador
Heather Hawkins

5,895m

above sea level at the
summit of Mt Kilimanjaro

\$35,166

raised for cancer
research and prevention.





**2019
TREK GROUP**

UPCOMING ADVENTURE TRIPS

Trek, Kayak & Cycle Tasmania
2 – 6 Nov 2019 w/ Annie Reidy

Trek the Cape to Cape Track
27 March – 4 April 2020

Trek the El Camino Trail
14 – 22 May 2020 w/ Annie Crawford AM

Trek Kakadu
7 - 14 June 2020 w/ Edith Hurt

Trek Iceland
24 – 29 Aug 2020



WE CAN TOO CLIMB
AFRICA'S HIGHEST
MOUNTAIN

Congratulations to the nine Can Too participants who recently climbed the tallest volcano in the world – Mt Kilimanjaro, with Can Too ambassador Heather Hawkins to raise \$35,000 for the Foundation.

The trek involved walking from 8am until 3pm for five days in weather conditions ranging from sunshine to hail storms. On summit day they started walking at 11:30 at night in -10 °C, with only a few hours' sleep and battling low oxygen – there's only 10 per cent at the summit – to reach Uhuru Peak 5,895 metres above sea level.

Watching the sunrise from the summit and sharing the experience with his Can Too team members and their support crew was Jeffrey Cohn's favourite moment of the trip.

He decided on the personal challenge to celebrate turning 60 and being able to walk again after suffering debilitating arthritis, made possible by finding a new drug to treat his condition.

"Climbing Mt Kili was the hardest thing I've ever had to do physically or mentally, but the reward was therefore immense.

"It was a lovely opportunity to achieve something together to reach the top of the highest mountain in Africa with the other Can Tooers despite our different backgrounds, ages, professions and abilities," said Jeffrey.

"We couldn't have done it without the 35 African support crew who were such wonderful, friendly people."

Fellow Can Too team member Diane Lawrence agreed that the support crew demonstrated 'UBUNTU' – meaning humanity – 'I am because we are'.

"I want to give thanks to our support crew who would cook for us, set up our camps, wake us at our tents in the cold dark with hot tea, help pull our boots off, put their arms around us when we needed it, carried our daypack when we were tired, helped us up a hill, or down a rock face and kept us safe and healthy working to the common goal of getting us up there safe – always with heart and smile," said Dianne.

Jeffrey also credits Heather Hawkins' leadership for the success of the trip.

"Heather really looked after us, she's amazingly fit and inspirational in every way."

Heather is an Ovarian cancer survivor who became an international adventurer and extreme athlete, her achievements include winning the North Pole Marathon at -41°C and completing the World Marathon Challenge – seven marathons on seven continents in seven days!

Her latest achievement was to share the beauty of mountain climbing in Tanzania with the brave group of Can Tooers.

"It was a privilege to lead the Can Too group, to see firsthand the spirit, commitment and courage of the trekkers as they climbed to the rooftop of Africa," said Heather.

Another Can Too devotee Dr Nisha Sachdev was inspired to climb the mountain by her best friend of 24 years, who she studied medicine with, Dr Nicola Willis. They had planned to reach this goal together before they turned 50.

Sadly, in 2017 at age 40 Nicola lost her battle with breast cancer, so Nisha dedicated the 120km hike in Nicola's honour.

"Nicola and I planned our trip just three weeks before she was diagnosed. Afterwards she said we would still do it as she'll beat the disease," said Nisha.

After losing her friend, Nisha joined Can Too to help with her grief and to prevent others dying from cancer.

"Unfortunately, as a doctor I diagnose and see people die from cancer all the time," she said.

Her highlights on the trip were the ever-changing scenery and the group's camaraderie, 'over the six days Mt Kili always looked different and you had time to think and reflect on life whilst walking'.

Nisha's looking forward to being a Team Captain on her next Can Too overseas trek.

"Thanks, Can Too for giving me the strength, encouragement and support in allowing me to do these great adventures."





FISH AND OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

BY CANCER COUNCIL NSW

Omega-3 fats are associated with a range of health benefits, such as lowering the risk of heart disease and relieving inflammatory conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease.

Oily fish including swordfish, Atlantic salmon, gemfish, Spanish mackerel and canned fish such as sardines, salmon and tuna are rich sources of omega-3 fatty acids.

Does eating fish reduce the risk of cancer?

Experimental studies and some studies in humans suggest that eating more fish and omega-3 fats may protect against cancer.

How much fish should I eat?

Because of the overall health benefits of fish and omega-3 fats, Cancer Council recommends people:

- Eat fish (preferably oily) at least two times per week; and
- Include some plant foods and oils rich in omega-3 fats in their diet.

Tips and ideas to boost fish and omega-3 fat intake - practical and healthy ways to increase the intake of omega-3 fats in the diet include:

- Have grilled or steamed fish with vegetables for dinner.
- Use fish in mixed dishes such as curries, stews, casseroles, pastas and soups.
- Use canned fish to make fish cakes and serve with vegetables.
- Mix canned fish through salad.
- Use canola oil in cooking, and canola based margarines on breads.

Mercury and fish

Some types of fish can contain high levels of mercury. High levels of mercury are known to damage the nervous system. Therefore eating fish that contain high levels of mercury every day or in large quantities could be harmful. This is especially a concern for children and women who are pregnant or intending to become pregnant.

Cancer Council encourages all people to follow recommendations of Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) about consumption of fish high in mercury.

**For more information visit
www.cancercouncil.com.au**

THE TASTY OTHER

SIR SARDINE SALAD

SIR SARDINE CHILLI, AVOCADO & SPINACH QUINOA BOWL

Ingredients:

- 120g quinoa, rinsed
- 2 eggs
- 2 big handfuls baby spinach, washed and thinly chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh dill, thinly chopped
- sea salt flakes to taste
- 1 tin Tuesday Foods sardines in chilli and olive oil
- 1 medium ripe avocado, diced

Method:

1. Place the quinoa and 300ml filtered water in a medium sauce pan and bring to a boil; lower the heat and cook for about 15 minutes, or until the quinoa is cooked and the water is absorbed. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool to room temperature.
2. Fill another sauce pan with water and bring to a boil; add the eggs and cook for 6 minutes. Remove the eggs from the pan and run under very cold water. Peel and set aside.
3. To assemble the bowl: combine the spinach with the dill and a pinch of salt and place on one side of each bowl. Toss the quinoa with some salt and a drizzle of the sardine oil and place on the other side of each bowl.
4. Top each bowl with half the diced avocado, a couple sardines and one egg, halved.
5. Drizzle with the remaining sardine oil and serve.

TUESDAY  DS





WE'RE BETTER TOGETHER

FUNDRASING STARS

This edition's fundraising stars' recipe for success is made up of the ingredients: teamwork, creativity, family and friends.

Their delicious methods were to host three cupcake stalls at Bunnings in Alexandria and two in Artarmon and a special high tea event at Burnt Orange in Mosman.

70 people attended the high tea, where they served finger sandwiches, cakes, tea and sparkling champagne for \$80. At their bakes sales, they each baked over 11 dozen cupcakes, selling them for \$3 each – each bake sale was a sell out!

TEAMWORK

Can Tooers Jen Patterson, Sharon Lowndes and Kate Southerton teamed up to raise funds for the 2018 Wollongong triathlon program, raising over \$3,200 each.

They met training in the North Pod for the 2017 Blackmores 10km Bridge Run program – where Kate convinced the trio to conquer the triathlon program and fundraise together in the following season.

By joining forces they shared the load and capitalised on their different networks, explained Sharon.

"I love fundraising with other people. It's not just on you, you get more support and your network is wider," she said.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The high tea event was a good opportunity to catch up with family and friends.

"We all invited our mums and suggested to friends that it was a great activity to do with theirs.

"It was heaps of fun, great to see family members and other Can Too friends at the event, Can Too is like a big family." said Sharon.

Jen agreed and said that the event was well attended by family members. Her table was a family affair with her grandma, aunts, cousins and friends all attending.

"We started promoting the event before Christmas – so we had a quiet a few people buy two tickets as presents for their mums – an activity to do together is always a great gift!" said Kate.

CREATIVITY

The team displayed superior skills to present their high tea and cupcakes with lovely designs, flowers and Can Too branding through out.

Jen credits Kate and Sharon with their design, event planning and cupcake making skills to help make the events a success.

"I was lucky to be part of the trio, Shaz and Kate should definitely quit their day jobs with the quality of their decorations," Jen said.



RESEARCH CAN TOO RESEARCHER WINS YOUNG WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

PANCREATIC CANCER



8%
5-year
survival rate



3,364
Australians were
diagnosed in 2018



10th
most common cancer in
males and 9th in females
in Australia during 2017

Cancer researcher Dr Angelica Merlot, who received funding from the Can Too Foundation in 2018, won this year's NSW Harvey Norman Young Woman of the Year Award.

Her award announced on the eve of International Women's Day at the NSW Women of the Year (WOTY) awards was presented by NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian at the ceremony in Sydney.

"I would like to congratulate all the incredible women who have deservedly been recognised as winners and finalists. Your achievements are paving the way for generations of women to come," Ms Berejiklian said.

This year's WOTY awards program attracted an unprecedented number of nominations and more than 9,000 votes.

Dr Merlot has dedicated her career to the deadliest of cancers, including pancreatic cancer, known as a 'silent killer' because it's so aggressive. It has an eight per cent five-year survival rate.

"With this award I hope to continue to raise the profile of the world's deadliest cancers," said Dr Merlot.

"There are so many people affected by cancer and it's wonderful to be acknowledged for my work in this field."

Can Too Foundation dedicated funds to Dr Merlot's work to create a better future for everyone affected by cancer. Her work has the potential to lead to more effective treatments for cancer patients and improve survival rates.

"My one-year young investigator grant really helped to kickstart my new research project and career. This was my first national research grant."

"I'm so very grateful for the support of all those who help fund research. Thank you for working so hard to raise funds or donate and continue to support this extremely important cause. Quite simply, without this support, research would not be possible. And I really couldn't have done it without Can Too and the rest of the community rallying behind me."

Named as 'Wonder Woman' by Marie Claire Magazine in a feature last year, her work in cancer research involves investigating how cancers grow and spread, become resistant to current treatments and how to stop this by developing new targets and medicines.

"Like many Australians, I have lost family members to cancer. It's their stories and struggles that encouraged me to get into cancer research."

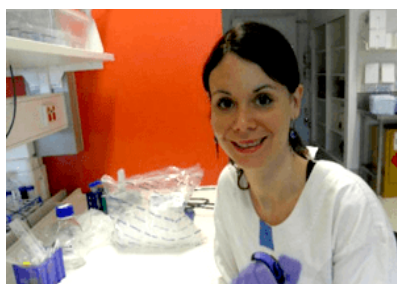
Following her Medical Science (Hons I) Degree, she completed a PhD in Medicine at the University of Sydney, focusing on the development of novel drugs to selectively target cancer cells. She now heads the Cancer Targets and Therapeutics research team at the University of NSW and Children's Cancer Institute.

She develops new targets and medicines to combat drug-resistant cancers and cancer spread, which is responsible for 90 per cent of cancer deaths.

2019 CANCER RESEARCHERS

We're pleased to announce this year's recipients of Can Too's annual round of cancer research funding: nine early career cancer researchers and two major cancer research projects. These individuals and projects have been chosen as they are showing the most promising research available in Australia.

Thank you to the Can Too community for all your fundraising efforts from 2018 to make this investment possible.

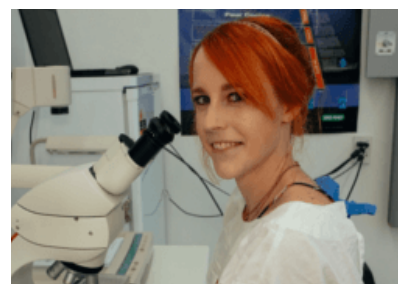


DR CAMILLE GUILLEREY
Blood cancer researcher

Researcher at the Mater Research Institute in Brisbane.

Camille has contributed to research that demonstrates that 'killer' immune cells can slow the growth of blood cancers, and that the functioning of these cells can be stimulated by certain immunotherapy drugs. She is studying how to better educate these 'killer' cells through vaccination research, so they can recognise and eliminate cancer cells. This work should help in the design of better treatments.

"I'm fascinated by how our immune cells interact to protect us from infections and cancer."



DR KELLY BROOKS
Skin cancer researcher

Research officer at QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute.

Kelly has investigated the role of two genes that influence if and how the melanoma will spread beyond the eye. Kelly is currently looking at a particular signalling pathway that is altered in approximately 90 per cent of uveal melanoma cases, with the aim to find ways of targeting this altered pathway and ultimately develop new treatments for uveal melanoma.

In approximately 50 per cent of uveal melanoma patients, the cancer will spread to other sites in the body and currently there are no effective systemic treatments available for this.



DR FERNANDO GUIMARAES
Skin cancer researcher

Scientist at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research in Victoria.

Dr Fernando Guimaraes is focused on immunology research, particularly into cells that constantly monitor, recognise and kill other, altered cells in the body – the natural-killer lymphocytes.

In his work the grants are especially helpful, because research using a patient's own immune system is risky and expensive, he says.

"Government funds are not enough to develop all promising projects and fundraising can make a big difference."



DR ZEYAD NASSAR
Prostate cancer researcher

Scientist at the University of Adelaide Medical School.

Zeyad will evaluate the targeting of lipid metabolism pathways in prostate cancer. He aims to use the information he discovers to introduce new treatment options, especially at the late stage of the disease when it's notoriously resistant to currently available drugs.

"We hope this will significantly impact prostate cancer mortality."



DR NAJOUA LALAOUI
Blood cancer researcher

A senior postdoctoral fellow at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research.

Najoua's work focuses on cancer therapeutic targets. She investigates the different ways by which cancer cells can die in order to develop new drugs to treat cancer.

Her findings have been published in top ranked oncology and scientific journals and led to the filing of international patents for new cancer drugs.



DR SARAH HANCOCK
Gastro-intestinal cancer researcher

Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of New South Wales School of Medical Sciences.

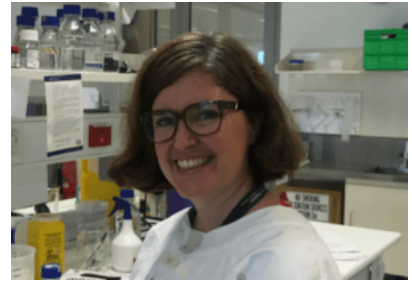
Pancreatic cancer has a notoriously low survival rate, which hasn't improved in the past 20 years. Sarah aims to detect one or more metabolic pathways (biochemical reactions) linked to the disease that can be targeted with new drugs. This could make chemo more effective, improving survival rates.



DR VIVIAN KAHL
Developing new ways to improve cancer therapy

Research officer at the Children's Medical Research Institute in Sydney.

Vivian is currently developing a new technique known as Telomere Fiber-FISH (TFF) to measure telomere lengths and what affects them, particularly in cancer cells. She aims to validate TFF in a panel of cancer cells to help provide a screening platform for new cancer therapies. The work has significant promise for prediction, diagnosis and treatment.



DR TRACY O'MARA
Gynaecological cancers researcher

Researcher at the QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute.

Tracy recently led the largest genetic study of endometrial cancer, identifying 16 genetic markers which predispose women to the disease.

Ovarian and endometrial cancer represent the most lethal and common gynaecological cancers in Australia. Tracy is combining genetic data from both diseases to identify changes in genetic sequences that predispose women to them. The result, she hopes, will be more effective treatments and new drugs.



DR PRAHLAD RANINGA
Breast cancer researcher

Post-Doctoral Research Officer at the QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute in Brisbane.

Prahlad's research is focused on identifying novel molecular targets for therapy. He's also studying the molecular mechanism that may cause drug resistance in patients, and identifying ways to overcome "chemoresistance" in cancers.

"Most patients initially respond to treatment but in a year or two the disease relapses and is fatal, which is why it's so crucial to develop new treatments for this type of cancer."



Understanding the mechanisms that cause acute myeloid leukaemia.

DR JUSTIN WONG
The University of Sydney

This project has the potential to increase knowledge and understanding of mechanisms that cause cancer as well as future diagnostic approaches and treatments in many cancers. By identifying the molecular abnormalities that occur in acute myeloid leukaemia, Dr Wong hopes to be able to establish new targeted drugs or genetic approaches to restore normal activity and stop this deadly cancer in its tracks.



Developing a simple test to ensure advanced melanoma patients get the right drug for their disease.

DR JAMES WILMOTT
The Melanoma Institute Australia

This study could lead to the introduction of a simple test in the earliest stages of treatment planning for patients who are diagnosed with advanced melanoma. This would provide critical information for decision-making and ensure patients are offered the treatments most likely to be effective against their cancer.



KEEPING COUPLED

IAN GARD

Sports Physiotherapist and Certified Ironman Coach Ian Gard shares how to determine your ideal training zone by keeping your heart rate and pace in sync throughout a session.

'I do my long run at an easy pace' is the usual answer I get when I ask injured runners how hard they are pushing themselves.

I ask them to define what easy means and the answers range from, 'I can just hold a conversation' to a shrug of the shoulders.

'At the end of your long run, do you think you could turn around and run it again' and 'would you usually be able to back up with a run the next day?' I ask.

Most of the time the answer is a definitive 'no'. 'You're going too fast in your long runs', I then tell them.

Intensity and effort are subjective and often difficult to define. We may feel like we're taking it 'easy', but we're being carried along by the people we're running with or are fuelled with adrenaline.

Wearing a heart rate monitor is one way to give you a more concrete reading of how hard your body is working such as which zone you're training in and will greatly benefit your training performance.

Most endurance running is predominantly aerobic, therefore you need to train at the correct effort or zone.

Generally, your aerobic zone is somewhere between 70 and 80 per cent of your maximum heart rate and you should be doing most of your training within this aerobic zone.

Even once you've calculated where your aerobic zone is,

this can change as you increase your fitness or aerobic capacity, so it's important to know how to regularly calculate your training zone and train within it.

What is Aerobic Coupling?

Aerobic Coupling in endurance sports refers to the ability to keep your heart rate and pace in sync throughout a session.

It can be used to measure whether a session is truly sustainable and I use this stat to ensure athletes are training at the optimal zone. I also use this to see whether they're ready for harder workouts after the initial base building phase.

Your pace and heart rate should move in the same way throughout a session. As your pace goes up, your heart rate goes up at the same proportion. That's the sweet spot where you want to stay.

If you're working too hard and have gone outside of this ideal aerobic zone, you will start to see your heart rate increasing, even if your pace isn't. Your heart rate can also be affected by heat, dehydration, stress and other factors. Because your heart is having to work too hard to sustain this pace. This is called aerobic de-coupling.

There is online training software that works with your heart rate monitor to automatically figure this out for you and it will tell you a ratio of how coupled you are (e.g. <5% is considered a good reference point).

How does coupling benefit your performance?

The biggest benefit to training in the correct zone –



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where your heart rate and speed are coupled, is that you feel much better at the end of your long run. You won't feel as drained, fatigued or sore. You'll then be able to run again without having to take days off to recover or worse, get injured.

What you need to do:

You'll need a running watch (Garmin, Suunto or Apple Watch) and a heart rate monitor (my preference is the chest strap.)

1. Take your maximum training heart rate or as a general rule 220 is a good guide and then subtract your age (e.g. a 43-year-old with a maximum heart rate of 183 beats per minute would be $183 - 43 = 140$ bpm)
2. Use the range of ± 5 to give you your first estimate e.g. for 140 bpm is between 135 to 145 bpm.
3. Run your next long run within or under this range
4. At the start of the run, check what pace you're running at to stay with that range - e.g. at 140 bpm, it might be 6 minutes per km.
5. At the middle and during the end, see if your pace and heart rate are still in sync (e.g. are you still running 6 minutes per km at 140 bpm or has your heart rate increased but you're still running at the same pace). This is best done on a flat section.
6. If your heart rate and pace start to "go out of sync", you will need to adjust your heart rate ranges down, say 5 bpm. Try this process until you start to see pace and heart rate remain "coupled" or in sync for the duration of your long run.

For more information on coupling contact Ian at sportsphysioonline.com.au



CAN TOO BOOK CLUB

Congratulations to Alana Bowles for nominating *Unmasked* by Turia Pitt as this edition's Book Club read. Alana will receive a signed copy of *The Annie Effect* by founder Annie Crawford.

After reading Turia's book Rachel Spencer (pic above) decided to run a marathon.

"Running a marathon was not something I ever had my sights on. Turia Pitt's book changed that and was the motivation I needed to sign up to Can Too's Queenstown Marathon program."

Share on our [Facebook page](#) by 30 June your recommendation of a sporting or motivational read and why you chose that book to go into the draw to win *The Annie Effect*.

MY LETTER TO 14-YEAR-OLD ME

MELINDA GAINSFORD-TAYLOR



Courtesy of David Tarbotton'

Dear Melinda,

I know you're struggling, feeling homesick at boarding school; you're missing your family and can't participate in the sport you love at the moment but you will persevere to discover that you can become the best you can be on the world's stage.

You'll win medals, championships, make finals and break records but away from the sport you'll achieve something else that's the best thing you'll ever do.

Even though you're going through a difficult time and you feel like the world is against you, with the criticism you're receiving in the media and from others, you'll learn resilience and will overcome your current injuries.

You will experience ups and downs, and your sport will teach you that in life things don't always go your way, and it's how you deal with these experiences that is most important.

Your coach Jackie Byrnes will give you the support you need to get you through the dark times. Jackie will always encourage you and show you that even though you have stress fractures you can still do pool sessions to help keep fit.

You will get back on the track. The support from your family will help you prevail. Your brother David will show responsibility above his years to provide

a home for you in Sydney so you can take your training to another level.

You will go on to run full-time, travel the world, and you will be proud to make it to three Olympics in 1992, 1996 and in Sydney in 2000 – which is the highlight of them all.

The disappointment of not making the Commonwealth Games Relay Team in 1990 gives you the 'kick in the but' that you need to knuckle down and get serious about your running.

You'll demonstrate the key to being a successful elite athlete is resilience. You'll demonstrate this when you win gold at the 200m World Indoor Championships in Barcelona in 1995, after learning the night before that mum is sick.

Finding out that mum had cancer will give you the fire to win the World Championships. Mum will inspire you to see that when things are tough you've really got to step up to fight for what you want.

You'll learn from mum, who beats non-Hodgkin lymphoma in 1996, to keep a positive attitude. And

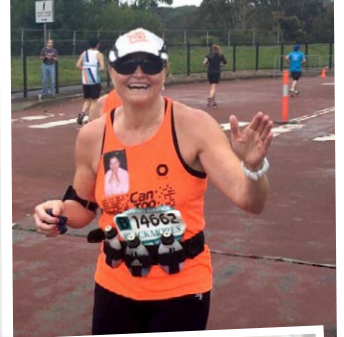
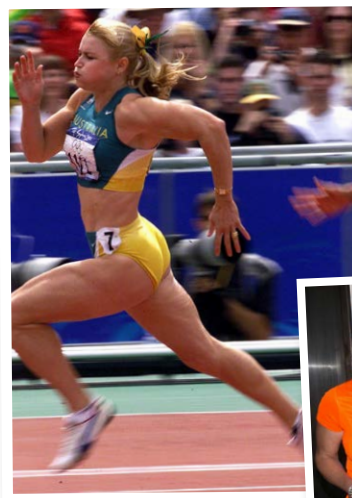
you'll be grateful to your competitors, particularly Cathy Freeman, for bringing out the best in you.

You'll get injured and told you may never run at an elite level again 18 months out from the Sydney games. You then make it the finals of those Olympics. This is the most rewarding Olympics experience of all.

When you line up in the 200m and 100m races you hear the crowd go berserk when your name is called. You relish in this home crowd support and end up coming fifth at those games. Your biggest achievement is yet to come: you'll have two children which is the best thing you do in your life.

You'll turn to running again to get you through hard times. This time it will be doing something you never thought you could do: to run slowly to complete a marathon. It will give you positive steps to take after a devastating time losing someone you love to cancer.

To throw yourself into this challenge will be like therapy – it will be a god send doing it. Doing it for a reason with Can Too, knowing it will help other people so they're not in the position of losing a loved one to cancer, will be the perfect way to cope.



The marathon program is what you need to get through the grieving stage. It's good to be able to run with others who have had loved ones facing difficult times with cancer as well, as they can relate to what you've gone through.

With Can Too you'll see that everyone's there to support each other and are all working towards the same goal, which makes you accountable, and keeps you motivated. You will make some great friendships and feel blessed to be a part of the community.

Melinda Gainsford-Taylor

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MAY SPECIAL



FAREWELL TO AN INSPIRING WARRIOR



Can Too devotee Mark William Ellis' passing on 23 February was a big shock to the Can Too community. The 54-year-old marathon swimmer, Mentor and Hall of Fame fundraiser, refusing to be defined by his disabilities, was training to swim the English Channel.

Prior to contracting sepsis from a skin infection, which kept him out of the water recently, he was training between 12 to 20 kilometres a week, whilst working full-time as a banker. His goal was to swim from England to France in a relay team in September to raise money for Can Too and Ryde Rehab's Return2Sport program.

I last spoke to Mark when he was spectating his team members in the Malabar Magic swim, a week before his death. I was writing a story about his mammoth goal and asked him previously if he had a motivational quote to keep him going in the surf when the going got tough.

"I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul", from *Invictus* by William Henley was his reply. Mark certainly demonstrated the poem's themes about the human spirit and its ability to overcome adversity.

Despite suffering debilitating leg injuries as a young man from his service as a British Royal Marine Commando, and never being a swimmer before joining Can Too, he mastered the art of ocean swimming. His scorecard included the Mana SwimFest 10km in Fiji and the Sri Chinmoy National Capital 9km swims having raised over \$55,000 for cancer research and prevention at the time of his passing.

Originally from Nottingham, UK, Mark represented his country as a schoolboy's rugby player, but the wounded ex-warrior had not exercised seriously for twenty years. He was unable to swim more than one length of a pool when he signed up for Can Too's Learn to Ocean Swim program in 2010.

"I found Can Too gave me a sense of achievement and something I could do despite having a body that is pretty broken from my time in the military."

He was inspired by the woman he went on a first date with who had just registered for the Can Too Palm to Whale Beach goal swim program.

"I thought if I don't swim too I won't see her all summer," said Mark.

He went on to marry Lizzie Crowhurst, she inspired him most of all.

"My wife, Lizzie, has so many attributes I would love to have and inspires me to be a better me."

A few years later he underwent surgery on his neck but was left with a permanent spinal cord injury. He became a C3 ASIA C Tetraplegic, known as an incomplete quadriplegic requiring him to spend months in a rehab centre learning to walk, swallow and talk again.

His great comeback to the sport post spinal cord injury was the 2018 South Head Roughwater swim from Bondi to Watsons Bay.



"When I swam through the Sydney Harbour Heads to complete what was a 12-kilometre swim for me I knew that I had achieved something momentous," said Mark.

"I did the swim for Lizzie and my Can Too friends who were so supportive of me when I was in Royal Rehab where I saw people that were doing it tougher than me."

Can Too Champion Kieran Gallagher, who supported Mark as a paddler, said that the swimmer demonstrated 'noblesse oblige' on that journey from Bondi to Watsons Bay and in life.

"In English the term 'nobility obligates' means the unwritten obligation of people from a noble ancestry to act honourably and generously to others, which Mark typified for me," said Kieran.

"It was no more evident than during his epic swim from Bondi to Watsons Bay – a truly trojan effort for an able-bodied man, but so much more for a man with his functioning leg inconveniently positioned on the wrong side to kick left, whilst completing a swim that was essentially a nearly five-hour left turn.

"I learned a lot about Mark that day, about how resilient he was, from being clunked in the head, ribs and shoulder with a paddle, to his capacity for forgiveness and appreciation to me for simply sharing the journey."

However, Mark ranked first in his swim career the honour of helping a beginner Can Too swimmer Celia Tilbury to achieve their first goal swim – the 1km Little Big Swim at Palm Beach.

"The conditions were atrociously bad and seeing the absolute joy when she crossed the finish line was the highlight."

Celia said that she felt lucky to have Mark as a mentor and an inspiration.

"He understood the challenges I was going through after losing my husband to melanoma and coming back from leg and back injuries. Without Mark's support through the program I doubt I would have completed that first swim," said Celia.

He also helped Sally Strautins reach her fitness goal.

"I will never forget my first Can Too program where Mark would swim with me most Saturdays ... keeping me calm, helping to teach me to duck and dive through the waves, literally holding my hand and pulling me down to teach me when to go," wrote Sally.

He was also proud of his involvement with the Invictus Games in Sydney last year supporting the Canadian athletes including Derek Speirs.

"Derek's journey back from injury to compete is incredible. He gave me his swim cap after the games and I wear it in all my swims now," said Mark.

Can Too founder Annie Crawford said that Mark was such a huge presence in the Can Too community and beyond.

"When he told me his life story I was in total admiration. It was a story of courage and determination. None of us know the cards we will be dealt – but Mark was inspirational in the way he responded to his deck of cards," said Annie.

His wife Lizzie and friends Kim Cook, Glenda Hunter-Brittain, John Cadden and Grant Campbell will still endeavour to swim the English Channel, a minimum 33.7 kilometre stretch of icy water, in a relay team in September for Mark's legacy, 'inspired by his tenacity and courage' said Lizzie.

Before Mark's passing Lizzie said that she participates in long distance swimming for him.

"There is something about ruthless misfortune that makes us realise how strong we really are and inspires us to live the life that we might not have tomorrow ... If Mark refuses to be defined by his disability, why should the rest of us be confined by being only average swimmers?"

He was determined that the legacy of the Channel crossing would be the funding of a Can Too marathon swim pod for the 10km race in Fiji in October 2019. The training group will be named in memory of Mark.

Can Too CEO Peter McLean said: "Mark was a very passionate member of our community. He participated in many swim programs and major Can Too Beyond swim challenges like the English Channel Swim."

"Mark was also a pod sponsor for this year's Balmoral 5km Swim program and a regular inspirational guest speaker. We're all going to miss Mark so very much for the values and incredible strengths we each saw in him. He was an amazing man who taught us so much."

You can donate to Mark's page here: www.cantoo.org.au/fundraisers/markschannelswim/english-channel-swim

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