

## Time out at a resort

Police Legacy is constantly reviewing ways to lighten the load on legatee families who have to deal with life in the absence of their partner or parent.



Pictured: Morgan being awarded school Dux by Sunbury Secondary College Principal Peter Hendrickson.

## Morgan – inspiration to young legatees

Morgan was just four years old when her dad, Sergeant Michael Ryan, was killed in a 1991 motor vehicle collision. Life for mum Gayle was turned upside down and she went back to work to help provide for her young children, Jarrett and Morgan. They all faced the hurt and frustration of life without Michael.

Whether it was the extra challenge or something already within Morgan is not clear, but this little girl went on to quickly make her mark. School was fun but at the same time serious, and her sustained effort paid off when she completed her VCE last year with an ENTER score of 94.55!

To top it off, she was awarded Dux of Sunbury Secondary College 2007 together with the Year 12 Caltex Best All Rounder prize for her academic achievements, success in sport, involvement in a leadership program, community services, fundraising for charity and volunteer work for the E J Whitten Memorial match at the MCG. But it doesn't end there. She also trains with the state netball squad and plays in top level competition.

Morgan has been accepted into RMIT University to study accountancy. We know Morgan will continue to make a mark and wish her well for the future.



In the past, we have taken children aged nine to 14 to an interstate destination to give the children a new experience and also to give parents a little respite. This year we have expanded the concept by inviting all children below the age of 15 WITH their parents to take a break from their busy lives and join us for a resort holiday in Queensland. We are sure that parents won't mind the change!



issue 24 march 08

## Accepting the challenge

**In the months after his father died, Brad Burke found himself withdrawing from friends and family to the point his concerned mother Colleen sought help from a work colleague of her late husband, Sergeant Michael Burke, who died of cancer in 2004.**

Colleen also spoke about her concerns with Police Legacy representatives at our 2007 Dandenong fellowship lunch. We had knowledge of the Outward Bound organisation and found a program that would help Brad regain confidence, enabling him to reconnect with those things closest to him. All we needed was for Brad to agree to participate.

Brad checked the course out on the internet, thought about it and accepted the challenge. With Police Legacy sponsorship, he flew to Canberra and joined a group of people who were about to experience new challenges and experiences that would stay with them for the rest of their lives.

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They were embarking on the 14 day 'Pinnacle' adventure of self discovery in the countryside south of Canberra. Unbeknown to supervisors, Brad was terrified of heights. It was ironic, therefore, that on the first day he would confront this fear head-on. Brad held back but eventually it was his turn to abseil down a small shaft, free-falling 30 metres into a dark cave below. He did it! He descended to the floor of the cave, exhilarated and relieved.

Everyone was feeling the strain. Both supervisors were badly injured in separate incidents on Day 6 and had to be replaced. But the challenges kept coming. On Day 7 each one in the group was left out in the bush to spend 24 hours alone with the most basic of provisions to feed and shelter themselves. They were encouraged to think about the really important things in life. In preparation the question was posed, 'If you are bored in your own company, whose fault is it?'



Brad is pictured during the abseiling lesson and during a group briefing



Day 2 involved a briefing, a rope course and pack preparation for a three day trek. Next day, Brad and his companions set off for Mt Tennant in soaking rain, familiarising themselves with the challenges. Brad was confronted with yet another test – he was made leader. As the overwhelmed Brad observed, 'I was the youngest and no one wanted to listen. I found myself encouraging others when I wanted encouragement myself.' They only had a map and compass to find their way, but they successfully navigated to the campsite for a 'hearty' meal of noodles and vegetables. Night was spent sheltering from the rain in an abandoned shack. Brad was still the leader on Day 4. The group had to 'bush bash' their way through rough terrain. He gladly relinquished the leadership at the end of the day. The rain stopped, the temperature rose and drinking water ran low. The group had to gather water from a stream and disinfect it with iodine. It was an extremely difficult and exhausting day. The test of body and character continued. On Day 6 Brad was again to address his fear of heights with two strenuous abseiling exercises, at the end of which Brad wrote in his diary, 'Perhaps I am overcoming my fear of heights. It's getting easier.'

Having all survived the solo experience, the group set about planning another three day trek in what was described as extremely difficult terrain. With the benefit of experience, those three days went better than expected but the new challenges kept coming. With a quick lesson in rafting, Brad was teamed up with a girl who did not have the strength to help keep the raft on course. He felt the chilled water of the river more than once. As the final day drew closer, the challenges got easier, including the last ropes course. And a very fit Brad observed, 'The 12 kilometre run near the end was a breeze.' With a better understanding of the importance of simple comforts, Brad added, 'On the last day we had our first shower since arriving and slept with real pillows in real beds.' Reflecting on the whole experience, Brad said, 'I gained so much confidence through this Outward Bound program. I had been struggling with little things. Now that has all changed. I've just completed a bar course and will be getting a job. Later in the year I'd like to go overseas. Last year was pretty hard on us all, particularly Mum. We are very grateful for the way Police Legacy helped me. And I would recommend the Outward Bound program to everyone.'

## 2009 Youth Development trip to Vietnam

In January 2009, Police Legacy will take a group of young legatees between the ages of 16 and 19 on a trip to Vietnam to explore another country and experience its history, cultures and people.

Twenty legatees and their parents have already been to our first briefing and preparations are well underway. An additional, important element of this trip is to give these young people who have lost a police parent rare time together with others from similar backgrounds. This opportunity is not available to them in their daily lives and we are very pleased to be able to facilitate this experience.



### Field Officer

Barbara Brand joined the Police Legacy staff in January as our Field Officer. Barbara was a police officer for 13 years but for the past 7 years has worked as a pastoral counsellor in palliative and aged care in suburban Melbourne. In her most recent role, Barbara worked with patients, their families and friends in hospitals and aged care facilities. Barbara has an ideal background, experience and understanding of dealing with people and will be a welcome addition to our staff. She has already met many of our legatees and will look forward to meeting others as the year unfolds.