



Art in Recovery Workshop helps service personnel and families

It's hoped the recent New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) Art in Recovery Workshop will be the first of many.

Veterans' Affairs and the RSA sponsored the free, two-day event in Christchurch, which was run with the support of the New Zealand Army.

It was open to serving and former Injured, Wounded or Ill personnel from all three Services, and NZ Army Families of the Fallen.

Former aircraft technician Gill McFarlane signed up for the workshop, after dealing with symptoms of long-Covid.

“Having Covid-19 and still working and being a mum, there's always pressure, there's always stress, and I thought this would be a good way of coming up with some tools for dealing with stress.”



Gill McFarlane with some of the art she created during the workshop

McFarlane deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan and Antarctica while serving with the Royal Air Force and Royal New Zealand Air Force, and is now a health and safety advisor at Base Woodbourne.

She described the workshop as fun, joyful and down-to-earth; she found drawing with pastels to be calming and meditative, and was surprised by how much she enjoyed the poetry exercise.

Those “aha moments” when people discover new activities, are a particular highlight for Elizabeth Love - one of two qualified art therapists who led the workshop.

Love, who previously served in the Royal New Zealand Dental Corps, said the creative arts are important in helping to ease stress.

She said participants were able to dabble in a range of mediums.

“[We] wanted people to go away with the ability, when times are hard, to have places to go in their imagination. They don’t have to wait until after work to reach inside themselves.”

McFarlane hopes to see similar events at all NZDF camps and bases.



(Left to right) Art therapists Elizabeth Love and Sarah Moore, with Papanui RSA President Doug Francis, workshop organiser and NZDF Liaison Officer - Injured, Wounded, Ill CAPT Rebecca Maddaford, and Head of Veterans’ Affairs Bernadine MacKenzie.


It’s a sentiment echoed by workshop organiser Rebecca Maddaford, Liaison Officer - Injured, Wounded, Ill, who said “In these busy and stressful times, something we should all consider is how we look after ourselves. I would like to see more of these kinds of creative art initiatives available, to support our NZDF whānau to enhance their mental health and wellbeing.”

You can read more stories and updates in the Summer 2022 edition of the Veterans' Affairs Magazine.





Connecting with veterans
and their whānau

 Read the Summer 2022 Edition of the Veterans' Affairs Magazine [PDF, 9.7 MB]
(<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/assets/VA-News/VA-News-2022-Edition-4-Summer.pdf>)

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