

## Press Release

May 21<sup>st</sup> 2016

### MarSUB Tech Workshop and Demonstration: Commercial Diving for Persons with Disabilities

The event was held at the Republic of Singapore Yacht Club on 21<sup>st</sup> May from 9.15 am to 2.30 pm. Gemma Thomas, a dive instructor based in Singapore, introduced Diveheart and gave a presentation on Scuba Diving Therapy for people with disabilities. Charles Rowe then discussed career opportunities in professional diving to create subsea gardens and showcases. There was an in-water demonstration on commercial diving equipment for people with disabilities.

#### Notes to Editor:

1. **Diveheart Foundation** aims to build confidence and independence in persons with disabilities using Scuba diving as a tool. Founded in early 2001 in the state of Illinois, the Diveheart has grown to a worldwide presence through the dedication of devoted volunteers. Diveheart provides scuba diving instruction, opportunities and adventures to children, adults and veterans with disabilities. Diveheart's headquarters are in Downers Grove, Illinois near Chicago. Their first international chapter has been launched in the U.K. and they have chapters across the United States. Diveheart works with individuals, clubs, recreation groups, hospitals, and veteran organisations throughout the U.S. as well as in Mexico, Israel, Australia, the Caribbean, China, South America and more. Diveheart's mailing address is: 900 Ogden Avenue #274, Downers Grove, IL 60515. Diveheart's office is located at 5100 Main Street, Downers Grove, IL 60515. Many of their diving adventures take place in the lakes and oceans of the world, but their diving instruction and many programs happen in community pools including those in recreation or rehabilitation centers, high schools, hotels, hospitals and more. They can work with virtually any type of disability. Their participants include individuals who have paraplegia, quadriplegia, amputation(s), vision and/or hearing impairment, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and many other types of physical and cognitive disabilities. Their dive instructors and buddies have undergone rigorous adaptive diving instruction in order to be able to dive with and assist individuals with disabilities. Diveheart is volunteer-driven. With the exception of some part-time staff, everyone including the founder/president of Diveheart is a volunteer. What this means is that the vast majority of the funding they receive through grants and from generous sponsors and donors, focuses on their programs. The learning curve for scuba diving alongside Diveheart's specially trained instructors and dive buddies is almost immediate. Their divers do not even have to know how to swim in order to enjoy scuba diving.
2. **Jim Elliott** is the Founder and President of Diveheart. He left a successful media career to found Diveheart in 2001. As President, he does not draw a salary and as an instructor trainer he has helped to facilitate adaptive scuba programs around the world. He is the co-author of the Diveheart Adaptive Scuba Training program and is a leader on forwarding Scuba Therapy research around the world. As a Rotarian, he lives by the

motto of "Service Above Self" and works with Rotarians and other service organisations worldwide to grow adaptive scuba programs that serve children, adults and veterans with disabilities in the communities where they live.

3. **Gemma Thomas** began scuba diving in 2009 when she moved to Singapore. She is an avid technical diver, exploring the deep sites around the region and last year was part of the team, who became the first people to explore the bottom of Lake Batur in Bali. She is also actively involved in a coral conservation project based in Tioman. Gemma has been teaching scuba diving for 5 years and recently became Singapore (and South East Asia) first female Global Underwater Explorers Fundamentals instructor. After taking a Handicapped Scuba Diving instructor course Gemma has been looking to give more people the opportunity to try diving and benefit from the medical benefits associated with the weightless environment. Over the next year Gemma will be working to set up workshops in Singapore and to bring Jim Elliot to Asia to conduct a workshop to train Diveheart instructors and offer the first Diveheart adaptive dive course in Singapore.
4. **Charles Rowe** entered the offshore oil and gas industry in 1980 as a commercial diver. In 1987 he relocated to Singapore and continued his career as a commercial diving supervisor and superintendent and an offshore client representative. When he was not working offshore, he had organised seminars and exhibitions on an underwater technical theme for Southeast Asia while chairman of the IEEE Oceanic Engineering Society. Later he arranged and taught underwater technical courses in Singapore and Malaysia on underwater welding and inspection to commercial diving for the past twenty years. In addition to training, he has been working to apply commercial diving technology to create concrete artificial reefs.
5. **Event objectives**
  - Create awareness about how persons with disabilities can benefit from SCUBA therapy and the possibility of training and employing persons with disabilities as commercial environmental divers/landscape artists and etc.
  - Promote innovations in technology to aid persons with disabilities to work professionally underwater.
6. **Long Term Objectives**
  - Establish the Diveheart Foundation in Singapore to use Scuba Diving as therapy for persons with disabilities and others.
  - Government approval to have an underwater site to create subsea showcases and gardens.
  - Use the showcases to promote recycling to create the underwater showcases to become the Garden Beneath the Bay.
  - Financial support from the private and public sectors to train and to employ persons with disabilities to become commercial environmental divers.
  - Make this Garden Beneath the Bay as an underwater tourist attraction and R&D centre.
  - Expand this concept of working underwater to restore the marine environment for training and employing drug and youth offenders to prevent them from returning to their previous antisocial behaviour.

- To make a Singapore a centre in underwater environmental technology as an export industry to countries in the region and abroad.

### **7. Benefits for creating an underwater showcase and gardens**

- Stimulates and protects marine flora and fauna and be an interest for the fishing and the Scuba sports industries.
- Means of waste recycling items into the cement batch that creates the concrete artificial reefs that serve as the foundation for the underwater gardens and showcases.
- Alternative lifestyle for those Singaporeans with anti-social behaviour.
- Give persons with disabilities and others a sense of well-being that they are contributing to Singapore by becoming commercial environmental divers/landscape artists. Pharmaceutical industry can identify the possibility of commercial environmental divers with disabilities being employed as underwater specialists in aquaculture to nurture the marine flora and fauna that could be used for medicinal and cosmetic purposes.

### **8. Supporting organisations**

- Caledonia Resource Development Pte Ltd
- Singapore Disability Sports Council is the only organisation in Singapore which reaches across all disability groups, offering a wide range of sports at both elite and non-elite levels. It is Singapore's national disability sports organisations. Their mission is to enable sportspersons with disabilities to realise their individual potential by providing them with the opportunity to participate and excel in sports both recreationally and competitively.
- The Singapore Association for the Deaf (SADeaf) was established in 1955 with a mission to assist the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing community to achieve a better quality of life and to enable them to integrate and contribute to society. SADeaf offers a range of services such as sign language interpretation, sign language courses, itinerant support service, note-taking, and community services.
- The Disabled People's Association (DPA) was established in 1986 with a mission to be the voice of persons with disabilities, working with them to achieve full participation and equal status in society through independent living. DPA aims to do this by influencing decision-makers to implement policies and programmes aimed at promoting social integration of persons with disabilities. DPA aims to raise public awareness of and share experiences concerning disability and seek solutions through round-table discussions, government consultations, position papers, and commentaries and letters to the media.
- ExtraOrdinary Horizons is a social enterprise run by people who are deaf with a vision to create an inclusive society where the disadvantaged attain confidence in their own abilities. They aim to promote deaf awareness through sign language courses, workshops, outreach programs, interpretation/translation services and performances. They also aim to help people who are deaf be better integrated into mainstream society and to be accepted for who they are.

### **9. Venue Sponsor**

- The Republic of Singapore Yacht Club was founded in 1826 with a mission to build upon the tradition as Singapore's premier yacht club, member-owned and affordable, and to provide the best sea sport facilities with excellent amenities.

#### **10. Event sponsors**

- Commercial Diving Services is a leading approved, certified and worldwide recognised professional organisation providing various kinds of underwater services and also rendering of mechanical, engineering and fabrication works since year 1982.
- Bauer Services and Sea and Land Services