



BRAVERY AWARD

BRONZE

Presented to

Simon Bekker

for his brave actions on 11th December 2022 when he and 3 other Good Samaritans successfully rescued two teenagers at Eerste Rivier Beach, Tsitsikamma, in dense fog and rough seas.

At 15h41, Sunday, 11th December, NSRI Oyster Bay duty crew were activated following reports from Fire and Rescue Services of a drowning in progress. 2 teenagers were reportedly being swept out to sea in rip currents.

NSRI rescue swimmers responded and NSRI Oyster Bay rescue craft were towed to the scene while Private Care ambulance services were activated to respond.

It appears that while swimming a 13 year old female was caught in a rip current when a 15 year old male, who was swimming with her, went to her aid before both were caught in rip currents and swept out to sea as bystanders raised the alarm and had thrown floating objects towards the two teenagers for flotation.

Jan Bester, from Jeffreys Bay, was alerted by his wife, daughter and her boyfriend. They had been walking on the beach where they noticed the commotion. Together with other bystanders they had also thrown floating objects, including an NSRI pink rescue buoy and body boards, towards the casualty teenagers.

The girl had then managed to get hold of the pink floatation buoy but was so exhausted she occasionally lost hold of the floatation buoy. The boy was holding onto a body board but by that stage he had been separated from the girl in the misty conditions.

Simon Bekker, age 66, a former Navy diver, immediately launched into the surf to try to assist. He reached the girl and while assisting her they were separated while trying to reach the shore. He had called on family and bystanders on the shore to throw more floating gear towards them. The girl still had the pink rescue buoy that she was holding onto.

Simon then went towards the male casualty, who was close to rocks and in grave danger. In strong currents Simon called to the teenager to swim away from the rocks before Simon was forced to retreat and recovered himself to the shoreline.

Then, 50 year old Jan Bester also launched into the surf, wearing flippers that bystanders had passed to him, in efforts to try to assist. In strong currents Jan reached the girl who was barely conscious and slipping under water. Assisted by the floating objects in the water, he was able to swim the girl safely to a beach.

NSRI Oyster Bay's Jaen Smit had arrived on the scene where he initiated medical treatment to the girl who was initially unconscious and not breathing.

Following airway management and re-warming she regained consciousness and spontaneous breathing while expelling water from her lungs. Jaen fetched his vehicle and she was loaded into his car and driven to meet up with the responding Private Care ambulance. Paramedics took her into their care.

Fanus Kruger, a local, and his family, his son Pieter and 15 year old grandson Steph, who are visiting from Rustenberg, at home nearby at Skuitbaai, were alerted by Franette Bekker to the unfolding drama.

They raced down to the Skuitbaai launch site where Pieter and Steph launched their jet-ski. They were approximately a nautical mile from where the incident was unfolding and despite dense fog and rough seas they reached the scene where they initiated a search.

In the dense fog and rough seas and close to rocks they located the male teenager who was still holding onto the body board. He was showing signs of extreme exhaustion and disappearing under water at times.

On reaching him Pieter reversed the jet-ski towards him in the breaking surf, keeping the bow of the jet-ski facing into the breaking surf and narrowly avoiding making contact with the jagged rocks. Steph was able to grab a hold of the front end of the body board that the casualty was holding onto while Pieter gently manoeuvred the jet-ski through the breaking surf and they were able to pull the casualty out of the danger zone.

They then changed positions with Steph taking the helm of the jet-ski and Pieter was able to pull the casualty onto the jet-ski and hold him secure while they headed towards the Skuitbaai slipway. There they were able to bring the male teenager safely ashore where additional NSRI Oyster Bay resources were at that stage arriving on the scene. NSRI Oyster Bay medics initiated medical treatment to the male teenager.

Private Care ambulance services arrived on the scene and the boy was taken into the care of paramedics. Both were transported to hospital by Private Care ambulance in serious conditions. The male was released from hospital later on Sunday and the female was released from hospital on the Monday. Both are on the road to recovery.

Simon Bekker's calmness and selfless actions under the difficult conditions, were exemplary, undoubtedly preventing a tragedy from occurring. The 2 teenagers ultimately rescued by the combined efforts of Simon and 3 fellow Good Samaritans supported by NSRI Oyster Bay Crew, indeed owe their lives to them for their selfless actions that day.

As fellow South Africans we are proud to be able to recognise and honour this achievement.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Dave Macready'.

Dave Macready
Chairman: Board of Directors



21 July 2023

Date