



**NATIONAL
SEA RESCUE
INSTITUTE**

BRAVERY AWARD

GOLD

Presented to

Edward Gutsche

for his brave actions on Saturday 1st October 2022 in saving 4 lives at Kelly's Beach.

On Saturday, 1 October, at around 10h00, NSRI Port Alfred were alerted to an incident that had happened at Kelly's Beach where 4 members of a family were rescued with the assistance of 2 Good Samaritans.

Edward Gutsche, 46, is a local man who owns a financial company and was body boarding at Kelly's Beach that day. At around 09h30, Edward kept planning this to be the last wave he would catch for the morning before heading home but somehow he kept riding waves until finally it was his last wave and he had exited the water to head towards his car.

A lady and her daughter came running up to him shouting appeals for him to help them indicating that their family members were drowning. Edward looked towards where they were frantically indicating and saw 4 heads bobbing in the water.

Earlier there had been a number of people on the beach but somehow at this moment it was just the 3 of them on the beach and 4 people in serious trouble in the mid break surf line.

Thinking it would be only moments before other people arrived at the beach who would no doubt alert NSRI Edward, without hesitation put his flippers on his feet and he launched his body board to go to their assistance.

By the time he reached the first casualty they appeared to have been separated from each other by about 15 to 30 meters each. He reached a girl aged about 16. He instructed her to hold onto his body board for flotation and he reassured her he would come back shortly.

He then reached a male child aged about 12. He instructed the child to obey him and took him to the body board. That child kept trying to climb onto the body board but using a stern voice Edward showed the child how to hold onto the board so both he and his sister could use the board for flotation. Reassuring them he would be back he went after the next casualty.

He then reached a female child aged about 14. As he reached her she disappeared under water. He dived under water swimming deeper searching for her. He eventually spotted her and she was looking up at him. The braids in her hair that he had noticed just before she went under water were floating about her face giving the appearance of an Octopus. She took in a deep breath of water before appearing to be lifeless or unconscious. Edward grabbed her and pulled her to the surface. Once above water she spluttered, coughed and expelled water. To his surprise she was conscious. He reassured her before swimming her back to the body board. He arranged them so that all 3 could use the body board for flotation.

Edward then went finally in search of the father of the children. Finding him quite a distance away at the back breakers Edward had to be very stern with him to encourage him to follow him to the board. He was trying to use Edward for flotation but Edward managed to calm him down before swimming him to his children at the body board.

Once they were all together Edward arranged them around the body board for balance and started towing them towards the beach. Edward admits he was surprised that no one else had reached them by this stage. No one had yet raised the alarm.

While towing them towards the shore Edward would keep a lookout for incoming waves, warning them of approaching waves, and together they braced themselves around the body board as waves were breaking around them and they all stayed together.

Nick Law, 64, a British man, in the film industry, who has been living in South Africa for 18 years had taken a swim when he noticed the drama unfolding out in the surf line. Nick grabbed the NSRI pink rescue buoy that is stationed at Kelly's Beach and he launched into the surf reaching the group at the mid breakers.

It appears that the family saw Nick as a lifeguard (because he had the pink buoy with him) and Nick's arrival had a huge calming effect on the 4 casualties. Nick then swam alongside them ready to use the pink buoy to assist any of the casualties who may have lost a hold on the body board.

Together, Edward and Nick brought the 4 family members safely to the beach where they were reunited with their 2 other family members in an emotional reunion.

Although a member of the beach office seemed to be watching them, surprisingly NSRI and emergency services had not been called. Nick alerted NSRI to the incident and the 2 men watched over the family on the beach before it was evident they needed no further help.

It is also notable that Edward's company is the sponsor of that pink rescue buoy at Kelly's Beach.

Edward Gutsche's calmness and selfless actions under the difficult conditions, were exemplary, undoubtedly preventing a tragedy from occurring. The 4 members of the family indeed owe their lives to Edward's selfless actions that day.

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

Dave Macready
Chairman: Board of Directors



21 July 2023

Date