

Maddy's Young Endeavour voyage

Numbala Vale girl, Maddy Kirshner recently had a once in a lifetime experience when she was invited to participate in the Young Endeavour Youth Scheme.

The Scheme provides young Australians with a unique, challenging and inspirational experience at sea.

"Our voyages increase self awareness, develop teamwork and leadership skills and create a strong sense of community responsibility amongst members of the youth crew," the website states. Participants range in age from 16 to 23 years old.

Maddy's parents were notified that their daughter had been offered a spot on board the Young Endeavour, through a collaboration between the Young Endeavour Youth Scheme and the Bush Children's Education Foundation.

The voyage commenced at Airlie Beach, Queensland, and for the next 10 days sailed down the east coast to Gladstone.

"When we went aboard on the first day, all 18 of us did not know each other," Maddy said.

"But Captain Adam spoke to us about the Youth Crews' responsibilities and informed us of a few guidelines to ensure communal harmony and unconditional positive regard for all.

"We came from different parts of Australia and were all complete strangers on day one but the experiences we endured together on board the Young Endeavour brought us so much closer together and by the end of the voyage we were like family.

"We had no phones on the ship and at the end of the voyage I really didn't want my mobile back. It was so nice not to have mobile phones on board," Maddy said.

At 8pm on their first night, the youth crew were notified they would be climbing the foremast. While getting into their climbing harnesses no doubt there were many suffering from acute nerves. The climb up the mast is by a steel ladder then they inch their way out along the yard with their feet on a narrow rope. Maddy said she climbed to the second yard and was very proud of herself as she is scared of heights.

Throughout the voyage the Youth Crew (youthies) were able to do sunrise climbs where they were able to sit up on

the platform and watch the sunrise from the top. Maddy described the views as breathtaking. It wasn't until the second last day that Maddy climbed all the way to the topgallant yard, approximately 40 metres in height. It was something she had been putting off during the voyage but with the support of the ship's staff (staffies) and other youthies she conquered the thing she feared the most.

One of the youth crews' job was to put the sails to bed when they came into Gladstone Harbour which Maddy said was quite hard as the sails were heavy. They had to fold the sails up over the yard while standing on the narrow rope.

Asked about accommodation on the ship, Maddy said the girls slept in the two six-berths whilst the boys slept in the 12-berth at the front of the ship and their beds were three-tiered bunk beds.

"If I put my knees up they touched the bunk above me but we didn't mind as we didn't spend much time in there."

"Our meals were fantastic, cooked by the chef Zac in the tiny galley. Three of us were rostered on each day to work in the galley, this included food preparation, washing up and cleaning."

"Every morning after breakfast there was 'happy hour' where the youthies and staffies cleaned the ship," Maddy said.

"This consist of the two six-berths, the 12-berth, heads (bathrooms), café, galley, bridge and the staffies quarters.

"I can't say cleaning was my favourite part but it was something that had to be done, with everyone pitching in, the job was done in no time."

"To keep the ship running we were split up in to three watches, Red, White and Blue (blue being my watch) and rotated through watch times.

"To continue sailing through the night the watches were 8pm-12am, 12am-4am and 4am-8am.

"During the day we were mostly all on deck and spent our time continuing to learn about the ship and practising the skills we needed to do.

"Duties on watch consisted of taking the helm (steering

the boat), keeping lookout, setting and furling sails and conducting rounds every hour. Rounds were a set of checks to ensure that everything on the boat was running smoothly."

Maddy said seasickness was the only downfall of the voyage and it affected everyone, some worse than others. By day three most had gotten their sea legs and the sickness became a thing of the past.

"Keeping the ship running for 24 hours, seven days a week wasn't easy work and it required everyone to be putting in 110 percent.

"Even though we were working on board we still had free time. In that time we could relax and do our own thing, mostly we hung out on deck and sometimes we played cards in the café (eating area) or spent this time catching up on lost sleep."

Because of the route the ship took it sailed around the Whitsundays and dropped anchor at many of the islands. The ship anchored at Whitehaven beach, Brampton Island, Middle Percy Island and Great Keppel Island. On the islands the youthies spent their time swimming, hiking and relaxing in the sun whilst enjoying the incredible views these islands had to offer.

On day eight, the youth crew took over the sailing of the ship. This is called Command Day and before they commence, the youth crew elect one of their mates to become captain of the Young Endeavour for a day. Catriona was elected and Maddy said Command Day was the roughest weather day they had on the voyage. They commenced their sailing from the lee of Great Keppel Island and weather conditions were logged as 'wind: ESE @ 20, swell: SE @ 0.2m, weather: fine'.

"Command day was one of my highlights from the voyage because for 24 hours it was just we youthies sailing the ship.

"We elected our captain, sail master, navigator, watch leaders, chefs and split ourselves up into our own watches.

"I think this was one of the moments that bought us closer together and really made us work as a team because there wasn't one person who had all the knowledge on how to sail the ship but as a collective we could.

"On day one there was no way I thought we would be able to sail the ship on our own but with the knowledge we learnt from the staffies and by working as a team we successfully sailed the ship from point A to point B."

At the end of the voyage Maddy and her parents were officially invited to attend a reception at the New South Wales Government House. At the reception the Kirshner's met the Governor, His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd) and his wife, Mrs Linda Hurley.

The Kirshner family were given a tour of Government House. The evening had been organised by the Bush Children's Education Foundation. At the reception Maddy was called upon to talk about her voyage on the Young Endeavour with board member of the BCEF, Jenetta Russell, in the presence of approximately 60 people. Commenting on his daughter's talk, her father said, "it took the wind out of my sails".

"Going on the Young Endeavour was a once in a lifetime opportunity and I am so thankful that I had the chance to participate", Maddy said.

"The lessons I learnt and the friendships I made I will take with me through my life.

"If you are aged 16-23 I encourage you to apply because I can guarantee you won't regret it."

A quote from Captain Adam, "Start by doing what's necessary, then doing what's possible...pretty soon you're doing the impossible."

This sailing trip taught Maddy all about the 'impossible'.



The 18 members of the Youth Crew with the crew of the Young Endeavour. Maddy is first left of the standing row.



Maddy (third from right) hanging from the yard after 'putting the sail to bed'.



Maddy with Captain Adam on board the Young Endeavour.

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