



saving lives at Triple Care Farm

Rear Admiral Sir David Martin, former NSW Governor, was only 58 when his life was cut tragically short by illness. This August, the foundation named in his honour marks 30 years of funding life-changing drug and alcohol treatment for young people at Mission Australia's Triple Care Farm near Robertson. ALEX SPEED speaks to Sir David Martin's family about his legacy and to general manager Gabriella Holmes about how Triple Care Farm has helped 3000 young people from around Australia.

ANNA BEAUMONT treasures memories of growing up with Sir David Martin as her dad. "He was such fun," says Anna, philanthropy manager of the Sir David Martin Foundation named in her late father's honour. Since its inception in 1990, the Martin family foundation has been the major philanthropic supporter of Mission Australia's Triple Care Farm, a detox and rehabilitation centre set on 44 hectares outside Robertson. This month the foundation marks 30 years of helping the centre, raising more than \$65 million for the treatment of 3000 people aged 16 to 24. The centre is unique in its holistic

model and success rates and goes to the heart of one of Sir David's great interests: young people.

Rear Admiral Sir David Martin was appointed Governor of NSW by then premier Nick Greiner in January 1989. Retired from the Royal Australian Navy after a distinguished career, he was already a popular public figure, voted Father of the Year the previous year by national charity, The Shepherd Centre. But to Anna and her siblings, Sandy and Will, he was simply dad.

"Dad was funny and engaged, supportive and firm but always very fair," says Anna. "He was hopeless at sport although he loved playing – he had really bad hand-eye coordination though

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CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN PHOTOGRAPH TRIPLE CARE FARM; RAISED VEGETABLE BEDS AT THE FARM'S RESIDENTIAL WITHDRAWAL (DETOX) PROGRAM, DAVID MARTIN PLACE; TRIPLE CARE FARM GENERAL MANAGER GABRIELLA HOLMES; THE FARM'S BOOK NOOK; LADY MARTIN AND THE LATE SIR DAVID MARTIN ON HIS LAST DAY IN OFFICE; ANNA BEAUMONT, SANDY DI PIETRO, LADY MARTIN AND WILL MARTIN (PHOTOGRAPHS SUPPLIED BY SIR DAVID MARTIN FOUNDATION).

that never stopped him. He loved people, talking and listening to them, and he loved chatting to young people. At parties as teenagers, all our friends would gravitate towards the dining table upstairs and we'd find them sitting around chatting to him and mum.

"When he was in the navy, Dad was away a lot so he always sent us lots of letters and postcards. Also, he would make up stories and record them on tapes for us so we'd have our bedtime stories when he wasn't there."

Lady (Suzanne) Martin, who was married to Sir David for 33 years, says he was "a lovely, very smiley man" and a wonderful father. He was dismayed, she says, to see young people, many with addictions and mental health issues, living in crisis on Sydney's streets in the late 1980s.

"We were living in Elizabeth Bay and David became interested in the work of Sydney City Mission, which was nearby," says Lady Martin. "He went out in the van with the youth workers in the evening and he was shocked to see the number of young people

living rough on the streets. He knew there were organisations aware of what was going on during the day but he was shocked to see so many young people sitting in gutters and hanging around corners at night and this worried him greatly so he kept up the interest and involvement."

Sandy supports the foundation's work and Will followed his father into the navy and today sits on the Sir David Martin Foundation's board. He says growing up he and his sisters understood they were fortunate to come from a safe and loving home but "not everyone was as fortunate". "Dad was always so disappointed that as a society we were not doing more for these young people," Will says.

Anna adds: "He used to say we were squandering the promise of our youth by not helping them and by allowing them to live under cardboard boxes. Seeing these kids in crisis affected him a lot."

Sir David continued his volunteer work with Sydney City Mission when he became governor. He became friends with

executive director Charles Chambers, who spent much of his life helping the poor and disadvantaged. Then on August 7, 1990, just 18 months after taking public office, Sir David announced he had been diagnosed with mesothelioma and resigned. He died three days later.

In the days before his death, he met with Charles to discuss setting up a foundation to help disadvantaged youth, says Lady Martin. "I remember Charles asking him, 'What do you think if we call the foundation after you?'" she says. "He said, 'Yes of course, whatever you want to do'. I know he would be absolutely delighted with the work the foundation has done over the past 30 years to support Triple Care Farm and kids in crisis."

Triple Care Farm was started in 1989 by Sydney City Mission, which became Mission Australia in 1996. It is situated on land purchased by a donation from Sir Vincent Fairfax. In 1990 the newly formed Sir David Martin Foundation became the centre's major philanthropic partner. When first established, the centre's name was a reference to three locations (a refuge drop-in centre in Kings Cross, residential care at the farm, then off-site supported housing). Today it refers to the farm's program: withdrawal, rehabilitation and aftercare.

Psychologist Gabriella Holmes has been part of the Triple Care Farm team for 20 years; the past 12 as general manager. She says Triple Care is the only youth specific withdrawal residential program of its kind in Australia, "a unique model of integrated holistic and comprehensive treatment that has achieved extraordinary results".

"Mission Australia has two programs here as an integrated part of Triple Care Farm: a 28 day withdrawal residential program and a residential rehabilitation program that runs for 12 weeks. There is also an aftercare program (off-site) for six months, which supports young people as they integrate back into the community."

Every year Triple Care helps 200 young people aged 16 to 24 with addictions to substances including methamphetamine, cannabis and alcohol. According to the foundation's *Impact & Outcomes Report August 2019*, which looks at the David Martin Place Withdrawal Centre opened at Triple Care in August 2017, the average age of people referred to the program last year was 20.3. All had a substance addiction, 93 per cent used multiple drugs, 82 per cent had experienced mental health issues, 70 per cent had a family history of substance abuse, 58 per cent had attempted to take their life in the year prior to arriving, and 36 per cent had experienced prison or temporary incarceration.

The farm has places for up to 28 people at any time and operates on a rolling intake – as one person leaves another arrives. Referrals come from around Australia. There are 10 places with 10 monitored bedrooms with en suites and 24/7 supervision coupled with a substance withdrawal program that integrates a medical and therapeutic model to help people get clean and sober. This includes group and individual counselling sessions, treatment plans, and education and support for families and carers.

A further 18 places are in the residential rehabilitation program for young people with comorbid addiction and mental illness. For 12 weeks, residents are given therapy and counselling as well as training, recreation and creative arts to develop living skills, education and pathways into employment and safe, stable housing. Not all who access the withdrawal unit proceed to the

residential rehabilitation program, says Gabriella, but everyone is assisted with six months aftercare.

"Ours is a voluntary program and that is really important because change is really difficult," says Gabriella. "The motivation to come here comes from different places. It can be a young person's family strongly asking them to make a change, a magistrate saying make a change or there will be significant consequences, or often the young person wanting to make a change for themselves.

"I have a great deal of respect and passion for the young people who come here because they all face huge challenges and have had significant trauma in their lives and are incredibly brave saying, 'I want to make a change but I can't do this by myself, I have to have some help'."

Triple Care's specialist team of 66 includes an addiction medicine specialist, registered nursing staff, psychologists, youth workers, educational trainers and social workers. The farm has had a long association and support from the Robertson community including The Robertson Doctor, Robertson Village Pharmacy and Moonacres Kitchen and from volunteers around the Highlands.

It costs \$20,000 for one person to undergo Triple Care's withdrawal program with six months' aftercare, and \$36,000 for the person to also complete the residential rehabilitation program with six months' aftercare. The foundation's research has found for every \$1 spent at Triple Care, there is \$3 worth of social impact and 92 per cent of graduates go on to find jobs and further education.

From August 2017 to December 2018, of 152 young people who went through the withdrawal program, more than 63 per cent moved into the residential rehabilitation program and 70 per cent completed the program. There was an 80 per cent reduction in chronic substance abuse.

But for each of the 200 young people accepted to Triple Care each year, there are thousands of others in need of help. Last year, Mission Australia received more

than 2000 inquiries for help. "There is a massive unmet need for support, specifically for youth drug and alcohol addiction in this country," says Gabriella.

"The number of young people seeking care vastly outweighs the number of beds available. We are really passionate about being able to replicate the Triple Care Farm model in other areas and that's something Mission Australia is working on."

Last year the federal government allocated \$9 million to Mission Australia to fund a centre modelled on Triple Care in the Batemans Bay area. To mark its 30th birthday, the Sir David Martin Foundation will launch its Hope Heroes campaign, inviting would-be supporters to commit to a regular gift of \$30 a month to help treat more young people in crisis.

On August 12, the foundation will launch a research paper, *Evolve: Are We Doing Enough for Young People with Drug and Alcohol Addiction?*

"We all think Dad would be delighted with the work that is being done by the foundation," says Anna. "We hope this report will direct our future focus to help more young people get the help they need by encouraging other not-for-profit organisations to get involved and to inform what else we should be doing." **HL**



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