



Burn Support at Castaway Retreat

BY ANNIE CHAPPELL

Castaways Resort Karioitahi Beach was the venue for the recently held Women's Burn Retreat.

This annual retreat was established in 2018 for the purposes of supporting women who have sustained burns.

Castaways was chosen as the host and venue for the four day event as they provide a supportive, private and safe haven, in a stunningly beautiful location for the 20 burns survivors from throughout New Zealand and Australia who register to attend.



Serena Rudd with the Burn Support Group on retreat at Castaways

During their comfortable stay, there were workshops, activities and pampering offered by talented, skilled and supportive organisations, along with guest speakers and health professionals.

Local woman, Serena Rudd, was one of those who attended. Serena and her family were involved in a horrendous and

fiery motor vehicle accident in 1997. Serena sustained numerous physical injuries in the accident, including burns to 60% of her body, and the loss of four fingers. She was not expected to live and spent one year in intensive care.

This horrific event perpetrated by a drunk driver, also robbed Serena of her partner and baby daughter who were both killed in the accident.

Twenty six years later, Serena still endures physical and emotional pain, but her cheerful outlook, gratitude and love of life is palpable and highly infectious. With a real twinkle in her eye, she speaks about her staunch belief in "keep on keeping on" and "giving up is not an option."

"The retreat was absolutely awesome, listening to guest speakers and health professionals, having relaxing massage therapy and getting to meet women who have gone through, or are going through similar issues. We had lots of fun and heaps of laughs" said Serena.

Burns Support Group events co-ordinator Michele Henry says, "The burn journey is long and the retreat is one way we can provide continuity of support to these brave women."

The Burns Support Group is a non-profit organisation receiving no government funding. "We are extremely grateful for the incredible generosity given by all those involved in the retreat. It is this continuity of generosity that allows us to hold this event and others annually, says Michele.

"Burns are traumatic, they can deliver what can be a long and arduous journey and will change life emotionally, physically and psychologically. The annual retreat builds life-long relationships which empower attendees to reflect and contribute to the group and themselves with invaluable skills."

Next year's retreat is in the planning stages and will return to Castaways from 6- 9 March 2024, again with an informative timetable that considers the needs and wants of women living with burns.

If you or anyone you know has sustained burn injuries, please do not hesitate to contact the Burn Support Group. Phone 021863670 website www.burns.org.nz, email michele@burns.org.nz