

THE LORD MAYOR'S BIG CURRY LUNCH 2020

SPEECH BY THE FOUNDER AND CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE LORD MAYOR'S BIG CURRY LUNCH, MICHAEL HOCKNEY MBE AT THE LORD MAYOR'S LAUNCH RECEPTION ON THURSDAY 20TH NOVEMBER 2019 AT THE HONOURABLE ARTILLERY COMPANY

"My Lord Mayor, Lady Mayoress, Sheriffs, Minister, Generals, Masters and Prime Warden, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen.

As you all know, since the first LMBCL in 2008, we have supported individual members of the military who have served in Iraq and subsequently in Afghanistan and their families. We have done so in many ways - adapting homes, improving mobility, re-training, providing education, respite care and holidays.

Sometimes the cost has been small but the difference immense; sometimes substantial funding may have to be provided for a lifetime of support. But, always, the focus has been on the individual and his or her family. From 2008 to 2017 we supported members of the British Army, regulars and reservists, through their national charity, ABF The Soldiers' Charity.

From the 2018 Lunch we have widened the beneficiaries to include all members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan and their families and we have welcomed the enthusiastic involvement of the two other national service charities.

For the 2019 Lunch we took a further step, as a result of a happy coming together of three strands of thought.

The first; the Civic and Mayoral theme of employment and employability.

The second; the three national single service charities' current commitment to help veterans into employment.

The third; hearing about an initiative which helps veterans find meaningful work.

As a result, the Lord Mayor's Big Curry Lunch Committee made a commitment to support the Pain Management Programme at the new Centre for Veterans' Health at the King Edward VII Hospital.

We will, for the next three years, provide financial support for individual veterans to take part in the carefully researched and trialled programme designed to help prepare veterans manage their pain, take on employment and hold down a job.

Last week the late Lord Mayor hosted a Banquet at Mansion House to mark the first twelve years of the LMBCL and to celebrate the £2.1 million the LMBCL Committee has handed over to the three national service charities.

During that very special evening, I had the privilege of interviewing a recent participant in the PMP. She had served for sixteen years in the Royal Navy.

For most of that time her life was blighted by virtually constant pain. She really did her best to work through it and she did, getting promotion and winning several competitions for sporting prowess.

Eventually, the continuing pain took its toll and she had to leave her beloved Royal Navy.

She heard about the PMP, was interviewed as to her suitability and was accepted. She completed the course.

As she said in her modest but moving answers to my questions, she learnt through the course to manage her pain.

She now completed the training for a new career and has been confident enough to set up her own business. So if any of you live in Devon and want your dog expertly groomed, seek out 'All Paws on Deck'.

A life transformed. Whatever the cost, so worthwhile.

Speaking of the cost, we are not funding capital work or infrastructure or the overheads of the Pain Management Programme.

We are paying the fees to go on the course. It costs a veteran £6,500 for the six month course. A lot of money to find oneself.

That's where the LMBCL - and all of you - come in.

Our intention is that the LMBCL will fund up to 18 veterans from any of Her Majesty's Armed Forces on the Programme, in each of the next three years. This will be managed through ABF The Soldiers' Charity's welfare team.

It will cost a total of £120,000 each year, which will still leave us with a significant sum to fund other programmes that support employment and employability and the wider work of the three national service charities amongst those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan and their families.

You already do so much. There is your much-valued sponsorship of the Lunch, including Rathbone Investment Management, the London Metal Exchange, Commonwealth Access Partners and twenty Livery Companies so far. Then there's the hugely-popular Livery stalls and the events you organise in the run-up to the Lunch, where we get the proceeds and the tickets you buy and encourage others to do so. The Committee is very grateful.

In addition to all these generous ways of supporting the LMBCL, I wonder if we might also ask individual supporters, businesses and Livery companies to consider funding an individual to be able to go on the PMP?

It's very early days but so far we have 5 of the 18 places funded. One by an individual, two by a corporate sponsor, AdvantageGo and two by Livery Companies.

Think what a difference that will make to those veterans and their families.

It's a potent story; specific, practical, measurable and very personal.

Could you fund a veteran?

However you do it, please support the Curry Lunch to help those who put themselves in harm's way for their country make a success of life once they are back in the civilian world.

The Lord Mayor and I look forward to welcoming you to the 2020 Lunch on 2nd April".