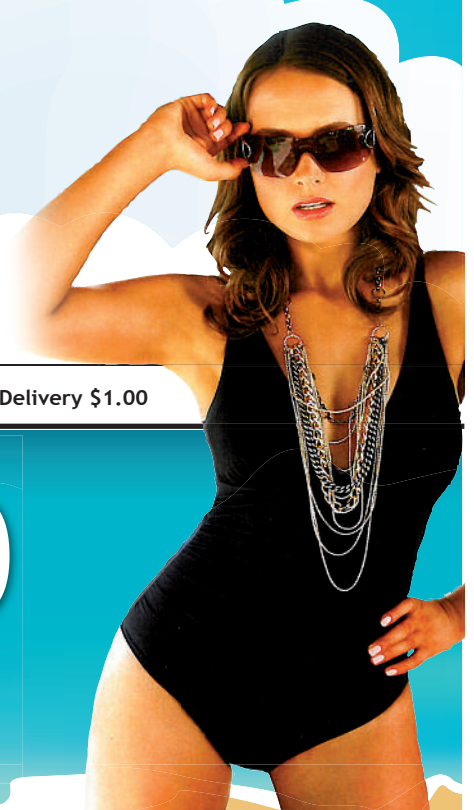


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The Daily Post

Wednesday, November 24, 2010

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PIKE RIVER MINE – HOPE REMAINS

Rotorua teen's wait for mate

by Joelle Dally
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A Rotorua teen who is the best friend of a 17-year-old feared killed in the Pike River Mine says he hasn't given up hope his "brother" will get out alive.

Roland Powell, 17, grew up in New Brighton with Joseph Dunbar — who is missing with 28 others after an explosion in the mine as little as an hour into his first shift on the job.

Struggling to hold back tears yesterday, Roland said that he considered Joseph to be more a brother than a friend.

He learned through a text message about 7am on Saturday that Joseph was one of the 29 trapped and he "just lost it".

He said he had not slept since.

However, he said he was "trying to stay strong for him" as he knew Joseph would never give up trying to survive — in spite of police saying they were preparing for possible loss of life.

"I've known Joseph all my life and if there's a chance, I know he'll come out. I hope and pray that he does," Roland said.

"No matter what gets in his way, he'll make it happen."

The pair met at North New Brighton School and quickly became inseparable.

Both attended Aranui High School for Years 8 and 9 and did everything together, Roland said.

"Everything we could have done we did it. Basketball, rugby, tennis... Most summers we spent on the New Brighton Pier fishing."

The pair lived five minutes' walk from each other.

"During the holidays I'd pretty much live there," Roland said.

Joseph was a talented sportsman and played rugby for the New Brighton Rugby Club under 14s.

The pair have stayed in regular contact since Joseph moved to Greymouth with his mother, Pip Timms, and Roland moved to Wellington. He since shifted to Rotorua.

"We'd talked on Facebook not long before [the explosion]. He was telling me he got accepted to the apprenticeship in mining."

"He said he was looking forward to doing it to help out his mum... He said he was going to come and visit me in a friend."

Roland said at Christmas holidays. I was looking forward to that," Roland said.

"I was just happy he was doing something he wanted to do."

Roland said at first he was not worried for his friend when he heard of the explosion in the mine on Friday, as he knew Joseph wasn't due to start work until this week.

But Joseph was so excited about his new job he convinced his boss to let him start on Friday — the day after his 17th birthday.

Roland is considering going to Greymouth to be with Joseph's family.

He was yesterday still trying to get in touch with Joseph's mother, Pip Timms, who he said he considered his "second mum".

Ms Timms said this week she had given up hope of her only child coming out of the mine alive but said the waiting for news was still "just horrible."

She said she knew on Friday night that he was gone, and was glad police were now admitting they could be facing loss of life.



MISSED: Joseph Dunbar is Rotorua teen Roland Powell's best mate. PICTURE / SUPPLIED

Situation is 'bleaker by the hour'

Police Commissioner Howard Broad has admitted the situation for 29 missing miners at Pike River Coal is becoming "bleaker by the hour, by the day".

Mr Broad made the comments minutes after dramatic security camera film revealed the scale of the blast at the mine on Friday afternoon.

Officials have known about the film for days, but did not reveal its existence until yesterday.

It was shown to the families of the lost miners before being made public.

The film shows a protracted explosion in which dust was blown out of the mine's entrance for 52 seconds.

The screening marked a distinct shift in the mood of those involved in trying to reach the missing miners.

"As the situation continues, the situation for those who are below ground is bleak and gets bleaker by the hour, by the day," Mr Broad said.

The man running the operation, police superintendent Gary Knowles, described the situation as "bleak and grave".

"We have to understand the risk of a second explosion is real."

Mr Knowles said there was no chance of anyone going into the mine until police could guarantee their safety.

There has been no communication with the 16 miners and 13 contractors since the explosion ripped through the mine, near Greymouth.

Pike River Coal chief executive Peter Whittall said he held some hope.

"What sustains my hope is the information we had from day one — survival or otherwise of a blast of that nature depends on where you are and what structure you are behind or where you are standing," he said.

"The other thing that sustains my hope is that we still have a compressed air line going underground. We don't know where it goes to."

But he conceded: "I think it is becoming obvious there may not be 29 guys all sitting together waiting to be rescued."

"How many of them are I don't know, but those are the ones I hope are rescued and those are the ones I am waiting to see."

Mr Whittall said a camera had been lowered into one of the mine's fresh air bases, to which miners could retreat to if needed, but it had not shown any signs of life. "The camera showed some minor damage to the area, signs that it had been knocked about and some general signs of disrepair."

— APN News & Media

More mine news, p5

HOUSE FIRE – ONE DEAD

One person is dead following a Whakatane house fire overnight.

Firefighters were called to the blaze on Wybo Veldman Place about 1.10am and extinguished it a short time later, a fire service northern communications spokesman said.

One person, believed to be the sole occupant of the house, died in the fire.

Police and fire safety officers remained at the scene this morning investigating the cause of the fire.

— NZPA

Pay and display parking in CBD

by Matthew Martin
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New pay and display parking meters will soon be installed on parts of Tutanekai St, and the good news is the price of parking won't be going up.

The Rotorua District Council is replacing its old single-bay parking meters with pay and display machines along Tutanekai St, from the City Focus up to the intersection of Haupapa St. They begin operating next week.

Council's city services manager Dennis Olliver said motorists would need to buy a ticket from the nearest pay machine and display it on their dashboard. Charges in the pay and display area would remain unchanged — \$1 per hour for a maximum of two hours.

"They have stayed at \$1 an hour for at least the past five years," Mr Olliver said.

Progressively replacing meters in busy central city streets with pay and display units was part of the council's current Ten Year Plan, he said.

"The pay and display machines will help minimise street clutter in high pedestrian areas. They're also easier to manage, with four pay and display parking units able to cover 45 to 50 parking spaces."

He said 44 single meters would be replaced by four pay and display units. Meters cost about \$1250 each and pay and display meters about \$8500.

"There's a huge saving there in the long term and there is capacity in the future to upgrade them to be able to use smart cards or text services."

Mr Olliver said pay and display machines on Hinemoa St alongside the police station saw a 30 per cent increase in use since the introduction of \$5 all-day parking there in October 2009.

Council works manager Peter Dine has previously told *The Daily Post* Rotorua could have a lot more pay and display machines in the future, eventually eliminating the need for costly meters.

He said free parking in the city would eventually be phased out, but that could take up to 20 years.



The pay/display unit.



SMELLY SLOGAN: Adrian Hodge was a runner-up in a recent T-shirt slogan design contest. His slogan poked fun at Rotorua's unique odour. PICTURE / STEPHEN PARKER

Sweet smell of success for Adrian's slogan

by Matthew Martin
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A light-hearted jest about Rotorua's unique smell has seen Adrian Hodge receive a runner-up prize for his efforts in a national competition.

The Destination Rotorua Tourism Marketing web development coordinator said a workmate put him on to the "Love Your Town" T-shirt competition, run by Air New Zealand Grab-a-Seat and Billi Tees.

His slogan — Pull My Finger — alludes to Rotorua's sulphuric smell and what many tourists believe the city smells like.

"I thought I could come up with a

better slogan than Rotovegas so I gave it a go," he said.

"We monitor feedback from tourists on our Facebook and Twitter pages, at least 50 per cent of people talk about the smell," he said.

"I thought Pull My Finger would be a perfect way to encapsulate that, to turn it around and to have a laugh about it."

Mr Hodge said he put through about six slogan ideas and then thought nothing more of it until recently, when he was told he had won one of nine runner-up prizes.

He receives a return trip for two adults to any airport in the Air New Zealand domestic network, five free

T-shirts of his design and \$5 from each T-shirt purchase will go to his favourite charity.

Mr Hodge said he had chosen Rotorua's Ronald McDonald Family Retreat, based in Ngongotaha, to receive the money. The retreat hosts cancer sufferers and their families.

"I've got a couple of kids and my heart goes out to people who have to deal with that, it's a very worthwhile charity," Mr Hodge said.

He also hopes Rotorua retailers with a sense of humour would stock the T-shirt.

He said the new designs would be available online from www.billitees.co.nz from December 1.

TOMORROW'S WEATHER

Fine, but a few showers
Light winds
24°
Full details — p14

TELLY BITES

What's HOT on the box
page 24

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