

INVICTUS GAMES

THE HAGUE 2020

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The Cake Lady who brightens up the ward and hearts

If you have been to the Zuiderpark, you have probably met her, Kath Ryan, also known as The Cake Lady. With her Union Jack dress and H.M.S Cap, she has become a part of the IG2020 scenery. She has been to every edition of The Invictus Games thus far, with the support of, as she calls them, 'her boys'. Her boys are the wounded soldiers for whom she has baked cakes since 2009.

It all started when she visited her sister who was taken ill and admitted to the hospital. Being the good sister that she is, she brought a cake to cheer her sister up. At the same wounded soldiers that came back from Afghanistan were also admitted in the same hospital as her sister. Kath's sister decided to share the baked goods with the soldiers. They enjoyed it that much that they asked Kath's sister whether Kath can come back with some more cakes.

The cake journey had started.

Two weeks after the first visit, Kath rang up the hospital and asked the nurses if she can come by and obey the soldiers' wishes. And of course, she returned with 12 different cakes and she got to meet the soldiers. The cheek level matched immediately and great friendships were formed.

The Cake Lady did not only make sure the stomach of the wounded soldiers are filled, she also fills the hearts of the soldiers. By spending time with them, listening to them and simply being there for them, she plays a massive part in the mental recovery of the soldiers. When asked if it ever gets too much for herself, mentally speaking, she responds by saying: 'Never. They are all my boys and I've seen them grow. I have been to many a weddings and celebrated birthdays of the soldiers. I do not see myself as a counselor or therapist, but I can listen to them in their darkest times of need. That is my privilege and duty.'

The soldiers are immensely grateful for the kindness Kath has shown over the past 13 years and have shown it in many different ways. When Kath did not have the financial means to cheer her boys up during The Invictus Games, they started a fundraiser to collect the necessary funds. When her garden needed to be spruced up a bit, the soldiers came to her rescue. The marines even got her a custom made 'H.M.S Cake Lady' cap to make sure she feels like one of them, because she truly is part of the team. Kath feels blessed to have been thrown on this path by destiny and to have seen her boys grown over the past years. "Sometimes I get a phone call in the middle of the night from one of my boys who is contemplating suicide or other forms of self-harm. By listening to them and reassuring them when they need me to, I am able to calm them down. I cannot put a bandage over their wounds, but I can hug them and provide a listening ear. That is what it comes down to, listening and making sure they do not feel alone.'

If you want to find out more about Kath, The Cake Lady, make sure to go to her website or follow her on Twitter. Or when you see her around, walk up to her for a chat. We can assure you, you will be moved to tears by this amazing blessing of a human being.

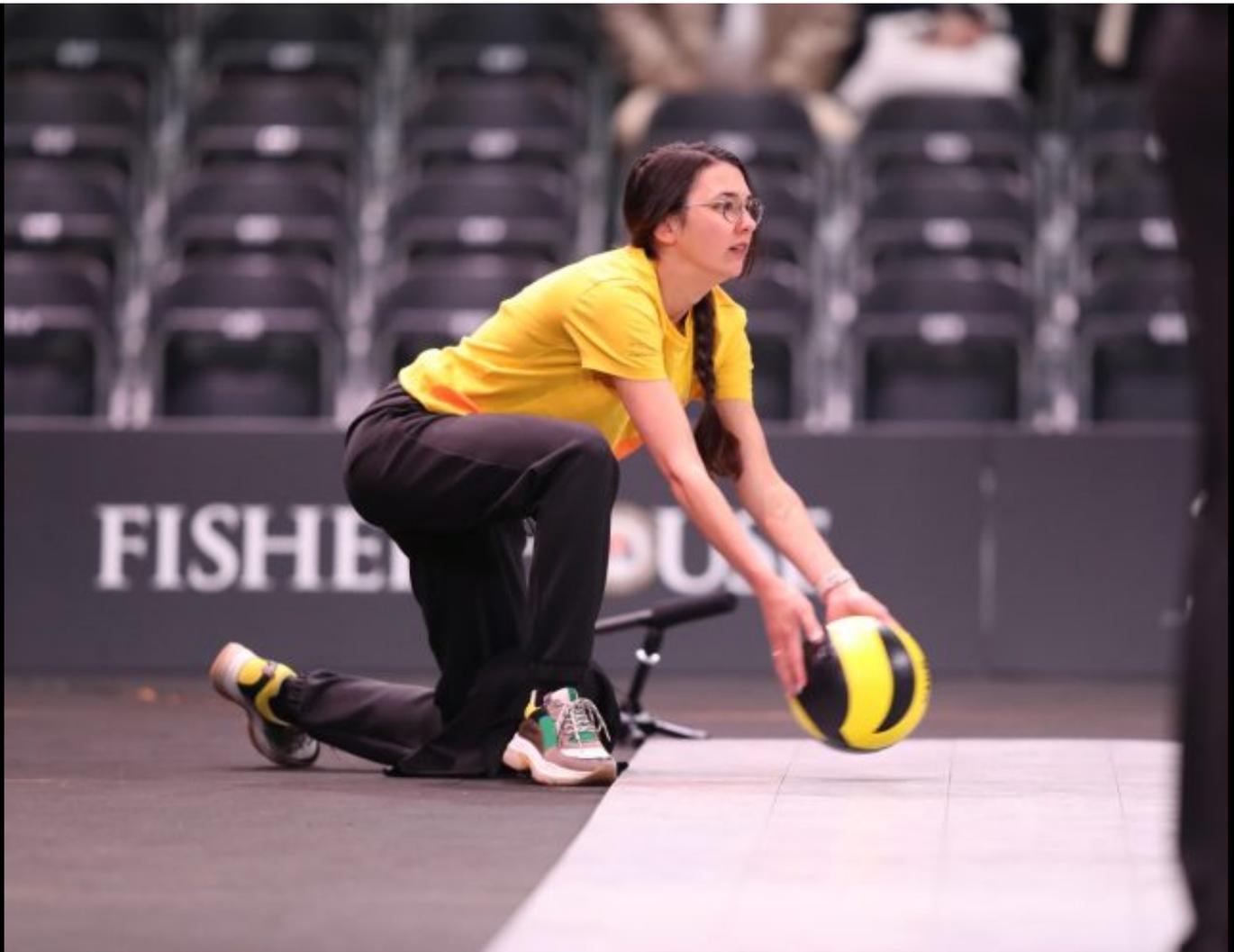


Zoey van den Waardenburg maakt nog iedere dag indruk. De 12-jarige dochter van Joyce loopt deze dagen op het Invictus Games Park nog altijd in de zilveren jurk die ze droeg tijdens de openingsceremonie. Daar citeerde ze, voor een volle zaal, feilloos het gedicht *Invictus*, van de Britse dichter William Ernest Henley. Een indrukwekkend moment tijdens die gelegenheid die haar dagelijks nog veel reacties oplevert.

Zoey is echter eerst en vooral naar de Invictus Games gekomen om haar moeder te supporten. Joyce van den Waardenburg doet voor de tweede keer mee. Ook in Sydney was ze erbij. Ze liep, na twee uitzendingen, PTSS op en kwam thuis te zitten. 'Maar dankzij Invictus heb ik mijn hulphond gekregen, kan ik mijn persoonlijke doelen proberen te halen en werk ik weer. Het is ongelooflijk wat je kunt bereiken.'

Joyce was apetrots op haar dochter. Dat zij het gedicht mocht voordragen, live op televisie ook nog eens, maakte veel emoties los. Andersom is Zoey vol bewondering voor haar moeder als ze haar op het sportveld, bij het zitvolleybal, powerliften, zwemmen en discuswerpen ziet. 'Het is geweldig om mama te zien genieten. En al die andere mensen. Ik ben echt heel trots op haar.' Moeder heeft soortgelijke gevoelens. 'Zeker wel!'

Joyce hoopt vooral dat haar dochter van de Invictus Games leert dat 'door hard te werken alles wat je wilt te bereiken is.' Zelf hoopt ze bij het zwemmen zonder paniekaanval de finish te halen. 'En ik wil zichtbaar zijn, met mijn hulphond.'



“Nice that I can do something as a volunteer”

For four days, 32-year-old Tanya Lavin works as a volunteer at this Invictus Games. She is a teacher English in everyday life, but during this event she is active as a ‘ball girl’ in the sitting volleyball.

Tanya became enthusiastic for this event by her 66-year-old father Peter Lavin, who served 22 years in the British army and has been living with his family in the Netherlands for years. “In 2018 he followed the reporting about the Invictus Games in Sydney and immediately decided to register as a volunteer when he heard that the IG came to The Hague”, says Tanya.

Her fathers enthusiasm worked so contagious that Tanya soon followed his example. “I think it is very good that there is an event like this and I think it’s great that I can do something for these soldiers in this way”, she continued.

Tanya works this Invictus Games four days as a volunteer. In the meantime she acted two days as 'ball girl' at the sitting volleyball. In addition, with two other volunteers, she ensures that as soon as the ball hits outside the field, players quickly get a new, cleaned ball.

She has never regretted her registration. "The atmosphere here on the grounds is really great", she says. "I sometimes see athletes at the volleyball that clearly does not have a lot of experience, but it is so beautiful to see how enthusiastic they are and how much pleasure they experience during the competition."

The decisive sitting volleyball matches fall outside of her volunteer shift. "But at the quarterfinals my partner and son also come and watch, I bought tickets for them before. We will enjoy that."



That the competitors at the Invictus Games are veterans is clear to most people. But it doesn't stop there, also among the volunteers are quite a few people who work at Defense or have worked here. On the communication department, with the IT, but also veterans who have been on mission one or more times. Wim Scheepers falls in this last group.

Since Saturday, Scheepers walks around on the IG-site. In 1999 he was emitted for the first time to Kosovo. It became a mission with high, but also depth points. He shared toy packages at Christmas, but also smelled the corpses for the first time. "That scent stays with you, forever."

The question of what his motivation is to be here this week leads to a stream of stories. Stories about the loss of a friend, but also about building schools. "Do you know the Cruijff fields in the Netherlands? We did something like that in Iraq. We have laid out fifteen multifunctional sports fields." He's silent, thinks. "I have seen a lot. That ensures that I wanted to help veterans who have returned less fortunately from missions than me."

Scheepers has many memories about his missions. There is a small smile to his lips when he tells about the beautiful moments. "We were in Iraq for reconstruction, but also to win confidence so that others could perform their task properly." As part of that, he has participated in the city council in As-Samawah for a while. First as chairman: "I learned them how to take note and how to have meetings, they had no experience. When that went well, I just attended for a while, waiting for possible questions."

The Invictus games are for him as he expected them: a sense of happiness and togetherness. "As Prince Harry said during the opening: it is a gift of God that I came back intact."

Scheepers hopes that the Invictus Games provide more understanding among visitors who do not necessarily have a connection with Defense or Veterans. He also wants to advise everyone to watch a sports match. "I watched the 400 meters yesterday. The last runner walked a lot more difficult than the rest, but the remaining seven runners waited for him and cheered for him. That is so incredibly beautiful here."



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De Invictus Games is een internationaal sportevenement voor fysiek en/of mentaal gewonde militairen. De Invictus Games gebruikt de kracht van sport om herstel te stimuleren, revalidatie te ondersteunen en breder begrip en respect te genereren voor hen die hun land dienen of gediend hebben.

‘Invictus’ staat voor ‘onoverwonnen’. Het symboliseert de vechtlustige geest, van fysiek en/of mentaal gewonde militairen. Het laat zien wat je, ondanks je verwondingen, kunt bereiken.

Aan de Invictus Games, die in het voorjaar van 2022 in Den Haag worden gehouden, doen 500 deelnemers mee, uit 20 verschillende landen. Zij zullen actief zijn in tien verschillende sporten.

Alle deelnemers mogen, op uitnodiging en kosten van de organisatie, twee vrienden of familieleden die hebben geholpen tijdens het revalidatieproces meenemen naar het evenement.

Iedere deelnemer aan de Invictus Games heeft zijn eigen verhaal, maar allen hebben ze de innerlijke kracht gevonden om door te gaan en zichzelf op te richten. Alleen, met hulp van familie en vrienden, maar altijd mede dankzij de kracht van sport.

The Invictus Games is an international adaptive sporting event for Wounded, Injured and Sick Servicemen and women, both serving and veteran. The Games use the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation and generate a wider understanding and respect of all those who serve their country.

The word 'Invictus' means 'unconquered'. It embodies the fighting spirit of wounded, injured and sick Service personnel and personifies what these tenacious men and women can achieve post injury.

The Invictus Games is about much more than just sport – it captures hearts, challenges minds and changes lives.

The Invictus Games 2020 will be held in The Hague in the spring of 2022 and invites 500 competitors, from 19 different countries. They will participate in 10 different sports.

All competitors may bring two friends or family members who have helped during the rehabilitation process, at the invitation and expense of the organization.

The participants all have their own story of physical and/or psychological injury or illness. But all of them have found the inner strength to go on and reinvent themselves. Sometimes alone, often with the help of family and friends, but always through the power of sport. The Invictus Games The Hague 2020 is *the* platform to share their stories and add another chapter to their book of life.

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