



Jamie Bellemore - Diving Assistant
Wally Adamson - Senior PSAI Instructor



L to R: Todd Paterson - Newest PSAI Instructor, Bob Swan - PSAI/PDI/C Instructor/Trainer and Owner/Operator of the BCD School of Diving, Wally Adamson - Senior PSAI instructor, Jamie Bellemore - Diving Assistant, Bill Stephenson - Divemaster /AI in Training

FINDING COMFORT IN THE DEEP

By Jon deVarenes

Whether you're just here for a visit or have lived in Brockville for some time, there is no escaping the supreme SCUBA diving here. There are many sunken ships and histories preserved in the clear waters of the St. Lawrence River lying in wait, ready to be explored. With such a vast number of world-class diving spots available this close, there's no reason why you shouldn't be at least a little bit curious! From Muscallonge to Lilly Parsons, the variety of dives ranges from low-level shallow dives that can be anywhere from 15-60 feet, to more advanced dives reaching depths as low as 240 feet. There are a number of ways to certify and train for SCUBA diving around town. One way to try it out is through a free program at the YMCA called Discover SCUBA. The program runs as a special one-day event to promote SCUBA and the introductory training course offered at the YMCA by diving veteran Bob Swan. This offer grants its participants the opportunity to try SCUBA diving in the

controlled environment of the D.B. Green pool to get a feel for the sport. All equipment is provided for the session, and should you enlist in the associated training course run through the YMCA, you can continue to use the same gear throughout the course. My own experience with Bob and his crew of highly skilled divers blew all of my expectations out of the water.

After a brief pep-talk with some of the divers and at least one other pair of hands putting on my gear and tightening the straps I'm submerged. My diving buddy signals me to ask if I'm alright. I answer quickly but I'm already a bit distracted. I can't help but feel like an astronaut as I slowly descend to the bottom of the pool—a whopping four feet under water. Despite how it may sound, the experience was quite surreal and quickly became overwhelming. A few feet deeper and I feel my breath quicken and an urge to escape to the surface takes hold. A few deep

breaths at the surface bring me back to earth and I'm advised to slow things down, and to really focus on my breathing. The rest of the session moves forward without a hitch, and it isn't a hard sell when I hear Bob say "we'll see you next week".

Before our dive we meet-up in the briefing room where we go over some basic information about diving. The briefing is presented with both an understanding of the serious nature of diving but is parried with a shared sense of humor between the instructors. The edge is taken off by the acceptance and excitement for diving each of these people possess. While the rest of the divers begin to suit up, I speak with master diver and diving instructor, Todd Paterson. Struck by both the wonderful and nervous feelings of the previous week, I asked what SCUBA means to Todd and why he likes it so much. He tells me that initially he began diving as a way to connect with his son. An initiative that was greatly successful and made him a better person for it. In describing his relationship to SCUBA and its affect on him, Todd did not get into the details of which dives he had done, but talked of the incredible feeling of calmness that lies beneath the water surface and how his experiences impacted his relationships and his life.

"Diving is a great way to clear your mind. It has made me a very calm person".

This calm comes from both the majesty of the sights and the experiences by the divers, as well as the continual awareness of the great responsibilities and challenges they may face. To be immersed in the deep is to leave the ordinary behind and to become part of a crew on a fantastic voyage. So whether you'd like to take the plunge into Brockville's past or just try out a new sport this summer, keep an eye on your pressure gauge and your regulator in your mouth. In the words of Bob Swan,

"I've been on thousands of dives and it's a different adventure every time" LH



Heather Blundon - on her first dive
Bill Stephenson - Divemaster /AI in Training