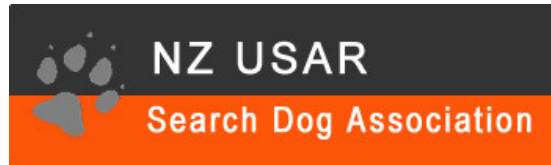




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MEDIA RELEASE

5 May 2011

SBS Marathon to support USAR Dogs

The invaluable skills of the search dogs used during the aftermath of the Christchurch earthquake will be celebrated during this year's SBS Marathon. The Urban Search and Rescue Dogs Association has been confirmed as the official charity of choice for the June 5 event.

SBS Bank Riccarton manager Matthew Mark said the work of the dogs during the September and particularly the February earthquakes had helped to save the lives of several people trapped in rubble.

"The February 22 quake resulted in the largest deployment of the New Zealand Fire Service USAR team in this country's history. Their dogs were joined by USAR K9 teams from Australia, Japan and Singapore. Over the following week or so these dogs and their handlers searched more than 80 sites resulting in several successful finds in very testing surrounds.

"We couldn't see a better way of saying 'thank you' for the skills and dedicated service they have provided, and continue to offer, than by making them the charity of choice for this year's special event being held at Lincoln on Sunday 5 June.

"We encourage any SBS Bank members and entrants who are taking part in the SBS Marathon to set up their own fundraising website so friends and family can support their marathon competitors, as well as the dogs and handlers who are volunteers with the New Zealand Fire Service USAR team.

NZ USAR Search Dog Association president Tim Drennan, of Christchurch, said they were honoured to be named the charity of choice for this year's SBS Marathon.

"In the aftermath of the Christchurch earthquake USAR dogs teams literally became man's best friend. My dog Boo and I were proud to be among the amazing dogs and their volunteer handlers who spent hours crawling over and through the rubble, with positive results in very challenging situations.

"The dogs are trained for their work with the New Zealand Fire Service USAR team by the USAR Search Dog Association. This training takes hundreds of hours by dedicated volunteer handlers. The majority of dogs have been 'rescued' themselves, having been sourced from animal shelters around the country," Mr Drennan said

“We are extremely fortunate to have nine of the country’s 11 USAR dogs based in Christchurch with the other two in Auckland. Funds from the SBS Marathon charity event will be used to support the dogs' training, transport and equipment.”

Anyone wishing to support the Urban Search and Rescue Dogs Association can do so by visiting www.sbsmarathon.co.nz

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www.sbs.net.nz

www.usardogs.org.nz

www.sbsmarathon.co.nz