



Australian hospital ship captain calls for maritime volunteers in Africa

Captain and his family's return home creates a vacancy in his role

Thursday 27 September 2018: Australian man John Borrow never planned on being a full-time volunteer but when he first heard about Mercy Ships in the 1990's, he knew it was an opportunity he couldn't pass up.

His long journey with the organisation that operates the world's largest independent hospital ship, Africa Mercy, has taken Mr Borrow and his family from Belrose, NSW, around the world and since 2016 he has served as the ship's Captain.

More than 400 volunteers from over 40 nations live and work on board the ship at any one time to provide free surgical services and health care education to those without access in the developing world.

Mr Borrow learnt of Mercy Ships through a friend. He later visited Newcastle, where the previous Mercy Ship Island Mercy was docked, and after setting foot on board he knew he wanted to be part of its crew.

"I was kind of disillusioned with my sea career. It's not a great culture to be in," Mr Borrow recalled.

"I went up to check out the ship and I was pretty excited. I kept thinking that I had found my thing; I found my calling."

Joining as the Island Mercy's Third Officer, Mr Borrow travelled to Papua New Guinea on a three-month commitment and absolutely fell in love. After hearing about his trip, Mr Borrow's partner Lee-Anne, who was a dietician and had just finished her master's degree in nutrition, was also eager to join.

After the couple married in 2001, they boarded the now-retired Caribbean Mercy, where Mr Borrow served as Chief Officer before moving on to the original Mercy Ship, Anastasis, in 2005, where the couple raised their first child Tim for the first 18 months of his life.

Eventually they returned to Australia to have their second son, Sam. After 8 years of being at home and working ashore Mr Borrow knew it was time to return to Mercy Ships.

The Borrowes joined the current flagship, Africa Mercy, in Madagascar in 2015, allowing John to jokingly claim that he's been the Chief Officer on every Mercy Ship except for one.

He took over as Captain in August 2016 and after three years of long-term service which also took them to Benin, Cameroon and Guinea, Mr Borrow and his family are now returning home which leaves a vacancy in his role.

"We are struggling right now to find long term Deck Officers, especially Chief Officers and Captains."

"These roles are not only critical for the safe operation of the ship, but also to lead our deck crew, which are mostly Africans and the nicest, most gentle, respectful bunch of men you're ever likely to meet."

"Our three years on board the Africa Mercy has been an amazing experience and we've met some truly inspiring people here, all with the same goal to help those not as lucky as we are."

"Once you see this level of pain and suffering you cannot be unaffected. You cannot ignore it, something changes, and you have to help."

To learn more about how to make Mercy Ships part of your sea career, visit mercyships.org.au/volunteer

About Mercy Ships

Mercy Ships uses hospital ships to deliver free, world-class health care services, capacity building and sustainable development aid to those without

access in the developing world. Founded in 1978, Mercy Ships has worked in more than 70 countries providing services valued at more than \$1.3 billion, with more than 2.6 million direct beneficiaries. Each year, more than 1,200 volunteers from over 40 nations serve with Mercy Ships. Professionals including surgeons, dentists, nurses, health care trainers, teachers, cooks, seamen, engineers, and agriculturalists donate their time and skills to the effort. Mercy Ships seeks to transform individuals and serve nations one at a time. Mercy Ships Australia, one of 16 international support offices, is based on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland. For more information, visit www.mercyships.org.au

Notes to Editors

High resolution photos of Mercy Ships are available upon request, with attribution to Mercy Ships.

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