



Inspirational speaker helps flood victims beat trauma

The power of one

A FERNVALE man's tale of resilience is helping to inspire residents living in the Somerset Region who are struggling to overcome January's flood disaster.

Thirty-three years ago, Fernvale's Col Mackereth learned the meaning of resilience and focusing on the positive after he sustained quadriplegia diving into a shallow creek.

Just 18 at the time, Mr Mackereth went from enjoying the life of a typical teenager to spending 11 weeks in head traction, unable to move anything from the shoulders down.

"One simple mistake changed my entire life. But you cannot dwell on one thing that's happened to you or you'll never move past it," Mr Mackereth said.

It's his insight, coupled with his expertise in delivering the globally-recognised Discovering the Power in Me (DPM) program, which is the basis for motivating flood-affected residents to try to move on following the devastating natural disaster earlier this year.

"I was one of the lucky ones in January. The floods wiped out the homes of our neighbours across the street and it got very close to our place, but we were spared," he said.

Like many people post-flood, Mr Mackereth and his partner Vikki wanted to do more.

"As part of the Spinal Injuries Association's Peer Support team, I'd already started delivering DPM to people who were newly injured at the Spinal Injuries Unit," he

said.

"But DPM isn't just for people who acquire disabilities.

"Its themes of developing inner strength and resiliency can improve the mindset of all people."

Developed in Canada by The Pacific Institute, DPM uses the best of applied cognitive psychology to provide people with the skills to get through particularly difficult situations, as well as being of use in everyday scenarios.

Knowing how much DPM had improved his thought patterns and perceptions, Col thought DPM would have a good effect on people who had lost their homes and possessions in the floods.



HELPING: Spinal Injuries Association peer support officers Col Mackereth and Katie Franz hosted a motivational program for flood-affected Fernvale residents, like Kate Girot (right).

Photo: Claudia Baxter