

Disabled people conquer scuba diving with Diveheart in Kota Kinabalu Sabah

:: The Borneo Post by Elton Gomez



Diveheart members, participants and volunteers posing for a photo during the Diveheart Adaptive programme at Mamutik Island.

KOTA KINABALU: With the tagline 'Imagine the Possibilities', Diveheart recently brought a whole new meaning and possibility to people with disabilities to conquer their fear in scuba diving.

Held for the first time in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia Diveheart, a non-profit organisation run by volunteers to help disabled people through scuba opportunities and scuba therapy, held a Diveheart Adaptive programme at Mamutik Island.

Diveheart Malaysia Ambassador and founder of Kids Scuba Malaysia, Hj Syed Abd Rahman, said the mission of Diveheart is to build confidence, independence and self-esteem in the lives of children, adults and veterans with disabilities through scuba diving, scuba therapy and related activities.

"The vision is to instil the 'can do' spirit in participants, inspiring them to take on challenges that they may not have considered out of fear.

"Using zero gravity and the adventure paradigm, we help participants believe that if they can scuba dive they can do anything," he said, echoing the tagline 'Imagine the Possibilities' to encourage participants to overcome their fears.

Diveheart Borneo Lead Instructor Ernest Teo said seeing the participants being able to 'stand up' for the first time underwater made everything worthwhile.

"This helps them to identify themselves as not someone with a disability, but as a diver.

"It is powerful, stories stick and they can share those stories and influence people around them. This will be a ripple effect and inspire others to do other things in life," he said.

Diveheart was founded by Jim Elliot who is based in Chicago. The two-day program also saw volunteers and Medical Professionals, doctors come together to train five people with disabilities for the Adaptive Scuba discovery programme.

Meanwhile, Borneo Divers manager Tasha Yong said this is the first time they catered for adaptive diving and they were thankful to Diveheart for training their Borneo Divers staff for the programme.

"With this event it gives us awareness and opens up more knowledge on how to provide better facilities for people of different abilities.

Also present were Rehabilitation Medical Specialists from Universiti Malaya Medical Center UMMC Director, Prof Dr Nazirah Hasnan and