

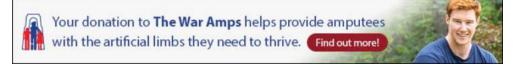
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## Sailor serves up breakfast to celebrate birthday

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Master Sailor Rommel Billanes, Marine Technician of HMCS Calgary, proudly presents a nutritious and delicious breakfast for the residents of Our Place Society. Photo supplied.



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Peter Mallett, Staff Writer

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HMCS Calgary Master Sailor (MS) Rommel Billanes loves volunteering because it nurtures his compassion for others while enriching their lives.

On March 23, he lived up to that mantra by hopping behind the grill and serving a complimentary nutritious breakfast to approximately 200 beneficiaries at Victoria's Our Place Society Community Centre.



"Our efforts were all worth it because the residents were



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mental health difficulties, substance abuse disorders, lowincome earners and elderly individuals living in poverty.

The meal MS Billanes and his party served consisted of scrambled eggs, sausages, hash browns, croissants, jam, peanut butter, fresh fruit and their choice of juice, coffee or tea. It's a step up from the hot oatmeal and coffee typically available at Our Place for breakfast, says MS Billanes.

Dawn Barr, Our Place Society Manager of Volunteer Services, says MS Billanes began working in the clothing distribution area of Our Place two years ago and immediately revealed that he would have an impact role in his work. Barr delights at MS Billanes's most recent efforts in serving breakfast, which she says was a 'special treat' for Our Place beneficiaries, along with his overall volunteerism.

"MS Billanes is an exceptional volunteer, passionate about contributing to a high-needs population," said Barr. "He has exhibited excellent work ethics, amazing compassion, and a full understanding of our values of unconditional love, hope, teamwork, safety, and belonging here at Our Place."

Barr has a lifelong connection with the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) that spans three generations. Her two sons are









### A Brighter Future

MS Billanes felt compelled to lend a hand in 2022 after learning about Our Place and its objectives.

"There's fulfilment that comes from knowing you have made a difference, no matter how small," he said. "It's a great way to spend my spare time, and the purpose it provides enriches my life in countless ways. As a CAF member, I believe in starting from my local community and spreading the compassion and kindness outward."

MS Billanes also knows that helping others is a two-way street. Diagnosed with operational Post Traumatic Stress Disorder stemming from a collision and fire aboard HMCS Protecteur in 2013 and 2014, it took him nine years to realize the full extent of the symptoms and to seek help. His condition shows signs of improvement through medical treatment and counselling. He says the volunteerism provides therapeutic value.

"Volunteering helps me deal with stress, anger, worry, and depression," he said. "I feel good when I work with others, and I also make friends, which helps pick me up when I feel down."



These accolades include winning the prestigious Photographer of The Year title in 2016 (Advanced) and 2012 (Novice classification).

He encourages other members to volunteer for community organizations and suggests keeping the work supervisor and chain of command informed so these efforts do not affect operational needs.

Left to right: Master Sailor Rommel Billanes, Sophia Billanes, Carolinda Luanzon, and Sailor 1st Class Bindiya Raman, Marine Technician, HMCS Calgary. Photo supplied.

Left to right: Master Sailor Rommel Billanes, Sophia Billanes, Carolinda Luanzon, and Sailor 1st Class Bindiya Raman,

Marine Technician, HMCS Calgary. Photo supplied.



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