

“New hope for divers with disabilities” Disabled Divers International

A new approach to teaching people with disabilities to scuba dive is promised with the formation of a new non-profit organisation, Disabled Divers International.



Fraser Bathgate

Founders of the DDI are two men with a combined 30 years of working with disabled divers—Fraser Bathgate, its first president, and Vice-President Flemming Thyge, both previously leading lights of the International Association of Handicapped Divers (IAHD). All the DDI's board members are volunteers.

“Our intention with DDI is to ensure that our students and their needs always have priority,” says Bathgate. “The new training programme we're offering moves away

from traditional methods of teaching divers with disabilities.”

Scuba diving has been shown to offer numerous benefits in terms of the social and physical rehabilitation of people with disabilities. Many find that, given the correct equipment and appropriate training, the restrictions they experience on land disappear with the near-weightlessness they experience under water.

“Regular recreation involving physical exercise engenders better physical and mental health,” says Fraser Bathgate. “Scuba diving is also a social sport, and being able to interact with non-disabled divers can have a tremendous positive effect.” The official launch of DDI took place on 27 March at the London International Dive Show, but Bathgate said he had already gathered extensive international support for its formation.

Its courses are designed to dovetail seamlessly with the

work of Depththerapy, the charity Bathgate set up to help rehabilitate through diving Coalition forces personnel seriously wounded in the Iraq and Afghani conflicts.

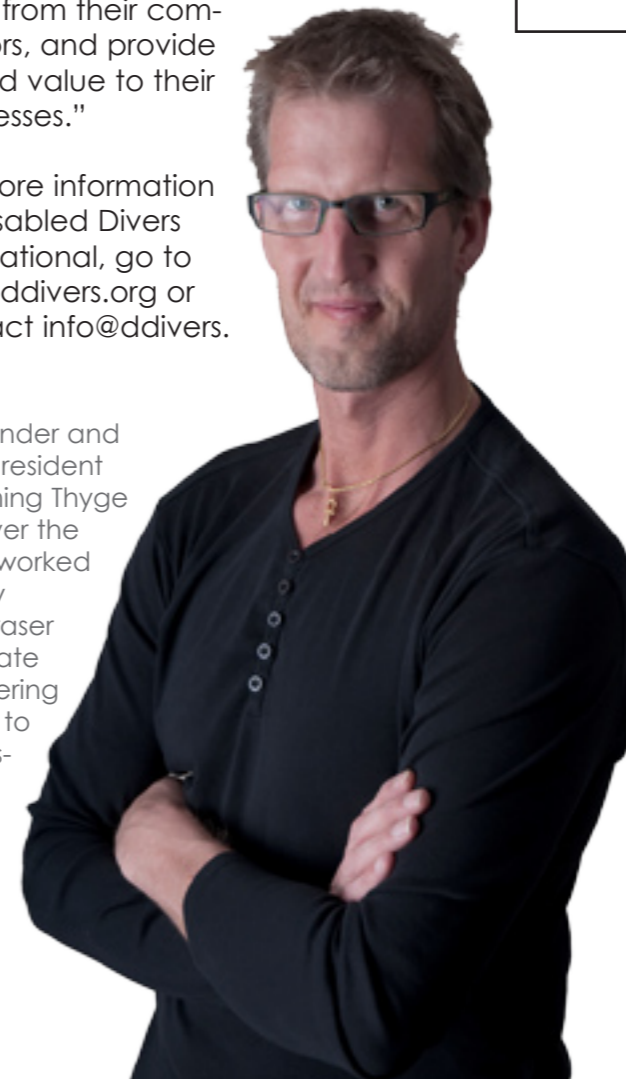
“DDI programmes are designed to work in conjunction with those of existing diver training agencies,” said Fraser Bathgate. “Our new layer of courses allows people who would have difficulty fulfilling standard agency requirements and standards to experience diving safely. We achieve this through modifications and enhancements to standard procedures and equipment.”

Another set of DDI courses is available for training instructors. “For the professionals, we provide the tools and knowledge required to train and certify disabled divers safely, within the various limits imposed by individual students' ability. Work with disabled divers is very rewarding, because the students share the excitement and joy of their experiences with their instructors,” said Bathgate.

Bathgate hopes that individual diving professionals and dive centres will be quick to take up the opportunities offered by DDI courses. “These training programmes can help to differentiate them from their competitors, and provide added value to their businesses.”

For more information on Disabled Divers International, go to www.ddivers.org or contact info@ddivers.org. ■

Cofounder and Vice-President Flemming Thyge has over the years worked closely with Fraser Bathgate on offering diving to the disabled



Shark Life launches Shark Diver courses

Choose from seven different shark species. Learn about feeding behaviour, biology, habitats. Have a greater understanding of sharks. ■

