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MEDIA RELEASE

SON TO RUN IN DAD'S FOOTSTEPS AT JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

Dave Pitt admits he was never much of a runner but as one of the coaches of Bairnsdale's junior CFA brigade he's hoping to inspire the next generation of volunteer fire fighters.

Dave joined the Omeo brigade as a volunteer when he was just 14 and now his son Ethan is following in his footsteps by joining the junior brigade.

Ethan will compete for the first time at the Victorian urban junior fire brigade championships in Warrnambool on February 24-25.

Nearly 500 juniors from 68 teams will take part in the championships, which will be followed in April by rural championships also in Warrnambool. The events are run by Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria in conjunction with the CFA.

As one of the junior brigade's coaches for the past 11 years, Dave is keen to foster young volunteers.

He hopes that Ethan will be like dozens of other local juniors who have progressed through the ranks to become trained and professional local volunteer fire fighters.

"We've had quite a few of our juniors go right through and join the brigade, which is great for the local community," Dave said.

The junior brigade helps young people to develop skills before going on to become fully-trained professional volunteer fire fighters.

Now 41, Dave joined the Omeo brigade to fight fires alongside his father when he was about 14. "Because it was a small rural town with limited numbers, young people were allowed to fight fires at the time," he said.

That early link created a lifetime of interest and commitment to providing a professional local volunteer fire fighting service.

“We moved to Bairnsdale and I gave running a try but I wasn’t real good at it. I only ran for one season to help out but I’ve been a coach for 11 years,” he added.

Dave’s firefighting duties have been restricted in the past two years by an arm injury, but he remains committed to his junior coaching role and is happy to see Ethan become involved.

“Ethan’s pretty keen,” Dave said. “He used to come along to training and a few demonstrations with me when he was younger and he was always interested so it’s nice to see him start running this season.”

This year Bairnsdale will have full under 14 and under 17 sides at the VFBV State Urban Junior Championships. Over recent years junior brigade members have won several state titles and they’re training two nights a week in the lead-up to the championships.

VFBV CEO Andrew Ford said junior brigades and the championships were the best way for young people to become engaged and learn practical skills before being old enough to attend fires.

“The VFBV State Urban Junior Championships can set young people on a pathway to serve their communities,” Mr Ford said.

“They encourage family participation and help to instil a sense of community service and volunteerism in young people while raising the importance of local fire brigades,” Mr Ford said.

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