

Big blast

FELIX FUND'S
**BIG
BLAST!**

Bonfire night is, of course, looming. Charity begins at home and you can support bomb disposal experts by having a Big Blast for local lifeline Felix Fund.

More often than you realise, bomb disposal experts risk their lives to prevent explosions that could endanger the lives of the general public across the UK and beyond. Every day they deal with highly pressured situations. This continued exposure to intense stress can have lasting effects, both physically and mentally. The Felix Fund, which is based at Didcot's Vauxhall Barracks, is here to help this unique group of men and women.

Melanie Moughton, who lives in Didcot, took over as chief executive of the charity at the beginning of this year. The cause is close to Melanie's heart as she comes from a military family – her dad was an ATO who worked to diffuse explosive devices during The Troubles in 1970s Northern Ireland. "There are men and women who risk their lives daily in the line of duty," says Melanie. "This can have lasting effects, both physically and mentally. For example, post-traumatic stress disorder can take up to a decade to manifest. The Felix Fund is here to help this unique group of men and women and I am so proud to help ensure they're cared for. Often the smaller charities like Felix Fund don't get the publicity the big military charities do. That's why we've come up with this seasonal idea to help spark people into raising funds and possibly awareness."

The idea behind the Big Blast appeal is simple, and fun. Invite your friends over for a party (perhaps after your local public firework display) or organise your own bonfire night following the firework code! You could

approach the organisers of your local public event to choose the Felix Fund as a benefiting charity, if they haven't already. "We can only continue our work through your support," adds Melanie. "Even if you just have a few kids in the garden with a couple of sparklers, it could be a way of raising a few pounds from the parents. Continued support from our neighbours makes a huge difference to improving the lives of the personnel we help, who have been involved with explosive ordnance duties."

Since its launch in 2011 the Felix Fund has provided normalisation breaks for more than 100 EOD teams on their return from Afghanistan. These breaks have proved vital in reducing the risk of poor mental health among individuals in these teams. The charity has also provided hardship grants, to the families of EOD operatives who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Financial support has been given to help the injured through home adaptations, for example the installation of a lift for a multiple amputee or in the purchase of specialist equipment, such as electric wheelchairs, and specialist sporting equipment. In addition, Felix Fund provided iPads for every member of EOD personnel who found themselves faced with long recovery periods in hospital.

● Big Blast fundraising packs are available from the Felix Fund – email allison@felixfund.org.uk or call **07713 752901**. They can also be downloaded from the website www.felixfund.org.uk where you can find more ways to support the charity and ask for help if you need it.