

Katherine's crusade for kids on the wings of an angel

Gabrielle Hall reports:

FOR 700 gruelling kilometres from Adelaide to the Flinders Ranges as part of the Operation Flinders Epic Impact Bike Challenge, Clare's Katherine Nugent's passion for helping young people was ever at the forefront.

But when the going got tough, it was the memory of a dear, young friend that kept her going.

Katherine dedicated her recent ride to Kade Macdonald who, at 18-years-old, lost his battle with mental illness in October 2018, and she is convinced Kade was right there alongside her throughout her training and particularly when times were tough on the epic ride.

Setting out on the ride with a set of angel wings strapped to the front of her bike – a gift from Kade's family, also dear friends of hers – Katherine said she had a secret weapon to keep her going.

"Literally for hundreds of kilometres training, pretty much by myself, I felt Kade was just there the whole time, I was chatting to him and he was pushing me out the door even when it was hard," Katherine said.

"Coming into the finish, it was an absolutely spectacular backdrop of the Flinders Ranges, and I felt like I had Kade's voice in my head almost telling me 'I always knew you could do it', and it was almost joyous in a way."

Kade's mother Meg, was there to

greet Katherine at the end of the bike journey, having been flown to the Flinders Ranges by their friend, and local pharmacist, Richard Elkhoury.

The 2019 Epic Impact Bike Challenge raised \$100,000 for Operation Flinders for youth at risk.

Katherine was sponsored by the Bird In Hand Foundation, along with Clare Valley businesses as well as individual sponsors via a Go Fund Me page.

Also in the Epic Challenge team was Katherine's long-time family friend, Georgina Hannaford, originally from Riverton - daughter of Kate Hannaford who was Katherine's godmother and a key mentor throughout Katherine's early law career.

Katherine has been involved with Operation Flinders for more than a decade, with husband Michael – a local GP – also getting onboard as team leader for about the past eight years.

Operation Flinders has been running programs to support youth at risk since 1991, and has long had good community support from the Mid North.

"It's a great example of a regional community providing the opportunity for young people from their area to participate in the program," Katherine said.

Now with the Kade Macdonald Foundation Inc officially registered, Katherine said the work of Operation Flinders was the perfect adjunct to what the foundation was aiming to achieve.

"Operation Flinders and the Kade Macdonald Foundation are just the



ABOVE: Katherine Nugent riding in the recent Operation Flinders Epic Impact Bike Challenge. RIGHT: Finally at the finish line, Katherine Nugent reaches the end of the gruelling 700 kilometre Operation Flinders Epic Impact Bike Challenge, pushed along the entire way by the memory of a special young friend.

perfect fit to help promote youth well-being, mental health and building resilience," Katherine said.

"The Kade Macdonald Foundation is about helping create pathways to assist youth mental health and wellbeing, providing a support network, and recognition of that need in rural communities.

"We've got to raise awareness about mental health, particularly for young people, and the foundation will be looking at ways we can establish strategies and support our youth whether it be through youth mentors and speakers or access to free, local medical support."

Katherine is chairperson of The Kade Macdonald Foundation, with the committee made up of members of Kade's family, friends, other locals and student council representatives



The recently-registered Kade Macdonald Foundation Inc will help create pathways to assist youth mental health and wellbeing.

from Kade's former school, Clare High School.

Katherine said the work of the foundation would initially focus on Clare, then hopefully the Mid North

and eventually across the state.

"I'm really proud to be part of a committee that genuinely cares about young people," she said.

"The amount of support the Kade Macdonald Foundation has had from across the community really shows that care and this is a really positive thing to come out of Kade's death.

"I really hope the young people in our community can feel that care we have for them.

"They're the children of our village, and through the foundation we hope they will know we want to look after them and help raise them into strong, resilient young adults."

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