

A Brief History and Context for the Annual 'HOPE4Kids' Awareness and Fundraising Campaign

In 2016, Graeme enlisted the help of his young offsider, Josh Rowles (Mick and Heather's eldest), to initiate a platform for community service, which consistently, holistically and visibly made us look beyond our own circumstances as a church and **give ourselves away for the sake of others** in a tangible and impactful way. It was important to us to support meaningful 'needs', and to establish or develop existing relationships with those we sought to help.

In terms of resources and infrastructure, what we pursued, **could only be a community level fundraising effort** and so we decided to do annual events that could / would draw as much interest as was possible within the obvious constraints. If the initial season was going to establish something that had a sustainable and reproducible future, the events had to be things that Graeme (or one point person or small group), could easily anchor whilst building an ever-stronger team around the ideas.

In 2016 it was a 24-Hour Table Tennis Marathon with Josh. In 2017 – a 6 hour backwards walk with a small team of walk spotters and supporters. In 2018 – a 24-hour drum-a-thon with a bunch of musical friends and partners and so on. As we worked the process out, we ended up basically doing **one novelty event on one year and an event that was easy to develop out of Graeme's music ministry the alternate year.**

The relationships of help that we built were nothing short of inspiring. Through a church family, we had a close connection with our little mate **Chloe Saxby** who emerged as our primary muse. Chloe and her family became (and Chloe's family are still) iconic in our region. She battled with an extremely rare childhood condition known as 'Vanishing White Matter' disease. With no known cure we were devastated when she passed away in 2020 at just 12 years of age. Her legacy is a dedicated research facility in partnership with Wollongong Hospital and University. Incredible when you understand that prior to this there were essentially only TWO (2) specialist doctors **in the world** that had any real knowledge of the disease. With the permission of Chloe's wonderful Mum Nyree, Dad Grant and Sister Mads, we continue to support the [@savingchloesaxby](#) foundation.

Next came **Beau McClinton**. Graeme was asked to dedicate Beau when he was just one. His family had a close relationship with Graeme who had performed at least EIGHT (8) life celebrations (marriages and child naming/dedications) for the family over about 6 or 7 years. Beau was special and suffers from [Ohtahara Syndrome](#). This is a form of epilepsy causing extreme numbers of full body tremors and fits DAILY with no known cure and an uncertain future. Beau has miraculously turned SIX (6) and we have been honoured and privileged to help him and his family achieve a number of small but significant milestones since 2018.

Michael Bereznai is now 10 years old and is a brave survivor of Neuroendocrine Hyperplasia of Infancy ([NEHI](#)) which affects the lungs and breathing capacity of its victims, and with that comes obvious challenges. It is a rare condition only recognized in 2005. We have helped Michael get passed what seemed to be impassable obstacles and we've helped establish his independence. Michael is the youngest child of Alex and Zoltan Bereznai. Graeme's wife, Kaz,

was Alex's and her sibling's babysitter in their early years in QLD. We are still in close relationship with Michael's immediate and extended family

Airlee Podmore is one amazing human being. Little in stature but huge in heart and determination. Airlee is only 11 years old and a few years ago started losing her hair through a condition known as '[Alopecia Areata](#)'. There is no known cure for this auto-immune disease that causes hair loss to varying degrees, and which leaves these children particularly vulnerable to all sorts of challenges. According to experts, Airlee has a challenging stream of AA. We have a long term and close relationship with her immediate and extended family and have played a small part in helping make life for Airlee relatively normal in the midst of huge challenges since 2020.

So ... in summary, we raise a little money for their families to deal with medication and some specialist requirements BUT most of the monies raised go towards helping find answers through research for what are essentially, childhood diseases without a known physical cure.