

THE 'YOUR DAY' FOUNDATION... ...for the growing generation

INFORMATION

What is the 'Your Day' Foundation?

The Your Day Foundation was set up by Rowie Meers earlier this year to celebrate the life of her husband, Alex who died from Myeloid Leukaemia in May 2006, aged just 40.

The aim of the Foundation is to raise funds for charities with causes which were important to Alex during his lifetime. Alex's great passions in life were his organic farm, his family – especially of course, his 3 daughters- and his friends.

Background

In October 2005 Alex Meers – an organic farmer and father of three young daughters - was taken into hospital where he was diagnosed with acute Myeloid Leukaemia. Following his initial treatment he suffered a stroke and was given only a few hours to live. Amazingly, Alex recovered from this and even though he was incredibly weak and lost over 3 stone in weight, he regained the use of his right side, got his speech back and started to walk with the aid of sticks. He was discharged in February 2007 in remission but only spent a few days at home before he suffered a seizure and was rushed back into hospital where they found the leukaemia had spread to his brain. Alex spent a further 3 months in hospital undergoing more treatment. He came home on 26th May to be with his family and died on 29th May 2007.

Following Alex's death, both Rowie his wife, and Matthew his brother, wanted to do something practical in honour of Alex. As Rowie puts it; 'To let Alex's memory slip into my family's past is not enough for me. I really want to do something that will give his life meaning to others – even those who didn't know him'.

For Rowie, this became setting up the 'Your Day' Foundation. At the same time Matthew, Alex's younger brother, who during Alex's illness and since his death, made cycling his therapy came up with the idea for doing a Lands End to John O'Groats (LEJOG) cycle ride (see below for further details).

Alex and Rowie Meers set up their organic farm at Rowie's family home, Purton House, near Swindon in 1994 not long after they married. Rowie and her family and friends continued to run the farm during Alex's illness and have done so since his death, feeling it important to continue with the work he loved.

'Your Day' is the title of a song written by a member of the family for Alex during his illness. It was also sung at his funeral and is synonymous with Alex in the minds of his family and friends. It therefore seemed appropriate to Rowie to name the Foundation after Alex's special song.

The LEJOG cycle ride

The 'Your Day' Foundation cycle ride from Lands End to John O'Groats will take place in October this year. Seven riders will be taking part: Rowie Meers, Alex's widow; Matthew Meers, Alex's brother; Pete and Tom Southerden, Alex's brother-in-law and nephew respectively; Pete Richardson, a fellow organic farmer and good friend of Alex and Rowie; Jerry Woods and Jason Franks. Jerry knew Alex through Matthew, and Jason joins the crew as an experienced long-distance cyclist.

As Matthew comments: 'The general feeling is that the ride is a much a tribute to Alex as it is a fundraiser and we're all hoping that it will be done in the spirit that Alex would approve of (at least some beer and curry!). However I think we will all feel a better sense of achievement if a good amount of money is raised for charity as well'.

Numerous family and friends, including Alex and Rowie's three daughters, nephews and nieces and many cousins, will support the riders along the way. On the fourth day of the ride – Sunday 28 October – there will also be a sponsored Fun ride for the children and other supporters taking place between Chippenham and Purton (near Swindon), Alex and Rowie's family home.

Charities supported

The proceeds from the Lands End to John O'Groats cycle ride will raise money for three charities. Each has been specially chosen for its activities, which reflect key aspects of Alex's life.

The charities being supported are:

Children with Leukaemia – <http://www.leukaemia.org/>

The Ellen MacArthur Trust (which takes young people sailing to help them regain their confidence on their way to recovery from cancer, leukaemia and other serious illnesses) – www.ellenmacarthurtrust.org

The Soil Association Apprenticeship Scheme – www.soilassociation.org

In Rowie's words: 'Alex loved organic farming and became very passionate about it. He believed that organic farming was truly the right and only way to farm sustainably. The Organic Apprenticeship scheme will be aimed at getting young people into organic farming so it seems a very apt thing to raise

money for and I know Alex would approve. I wanted 'Your Day' to in some way represent a positive impact on the younger generation'.

The future

It is hoped that following a successful Lands End to John O'Groats cycle run and a West Country based Fun Ride day, the Your Day Foundation will go on to fundraise for other deserving charities in the future.

For further information or to arrange a press interview please contact Rowie Meers:

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