

# ID... is the key

Sam is a first year university student whose story shares his passion for the identification of young carers of all ages and circumstances. He cares for his mum who suffers MS, this is Sam's story...

G'day, I'm Sam and I'm a first year university student studying to become a paramedic. I play Australian rules football and have recently discovered a passion for performing (both with my guitar and on stage in local productions such as 'Fame' and 'Singing in the Rain').

I have been involved in the young carer organisation for nearly five years now and have been involved in numerous activities with both Carers Victoria and Carers Australia.

I have looked after my mum since I was around the age of ten and was first identified as a young carer in mid 2006 (age 15). Before this I thought I wasn't doing anything out the ordinary, my mum wasn't well but that was just my life. I was at school, I played footy, I was just a normal kid, and I still am. Only now I know that there are others like me out there who care for a family member or a close friend, and there is a whole organisation devoted to support carers and young carers.

My passion for identifying young carers has not changed at all over the years and I have striven to learn all I can about how to help the identification process. From talking to other young carers and young carer workers I have learnt that there are 300,00 approximately unidentified young carers in Australia. I have learnt that things like; handing school work in late, being constantly tired and stressed and having a limited social life are all possibly caused by a person being a young carer. I have learnt that unidentified young carers may not know/think they are a young carer ('it's just my life') or are embarrassed of people finding out about their situation.

My life has changed dramatically for the better since being identified as a young carer. There is support and people who want to help out there. I have met some amazing people from all over the country (both young carers and people who work in the field), the relationship you have with them is deep and full of understanding as they are all from similar circumstances. I could not imagine my life without these people.

So if you know anyone who you think may fit the young carer mould... find out, because you may just change their life forever.

Cheers, Sammy O'Brien

SAM



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