Hawaiian Ride for Youth

Rider Profile

Peter and James Trench

James Trench has literally grown up with the Hawaiian Ride for Youth.

Ever since he can remember his dad, Peter, has been involved in the event - as a rider, chief coach, mentor and founder.

As the Hawaiian Ride for Youth prepares for its 20th year anniversary in March 2022, James is joining his dad, taking part in his first Hawaiian Ride for Youth.

"This is such an awesome experience and to be able to do this with my parent is even better," James says.

When the Hawaiian Ride for Youth cyclists begin the gruelling 700km ride from Albany to Perth on 22 March 2022, the Trench family will mark a two-decade relationship with Youth Focus as it helps young West Australians at risk of suicide and mental health issues.

Peter was amongst a group of Dads who, in 2002, decided to transform their past time of cycling for fitness into a charity event to help young people.

Through his gym, Trench Health and Fitness, Peter met Gus Irdi, who at the time was Chairman of a then little-known mental health group called Youth Focus. Peter learned that Youth Focus was supporting young West Australians at risk of suicide and mental health issues like anxiety, self-harm and depression – information that prompted Peter to suggest to the cycling dads that this was the group they should cycle for.

When the record number of more than 200 riders leave on 22 March for the 20th Hawaiian Ride for Youth, Peter and the founding riders will cycle the Heritage Riders' peloton - it's a nod to the group who created the ride, raised $26 million for Youth Focus and - most importantly - saved countless young West Australian lives which might have been lost to suicide.

This year, COVID has prevented the cyclists from visiting young people in regional schools to discuss mental health.

"Going into the schools is just magnificent," Peter says. "When we first started, the students would ask us things like "how heavy is your bike? How fast do you ride? Why do you shave your legs?" – now we go into the schools, and they ask on behalf of a friend or for themselves; "who should I talk to if I can't tell mum or dad?" and because of Youth Focus a lot of the schools have counsellors and we just start really good conversations about mental health."

Peter, who has cycled in every Hawaiian Ride for Youth (bar one due to a knee injury) is immensely proud that his son James and other young cyclists are taking part in the 20th anniversary, Hawaiian Ride for Youth.

"To have my son ride with me and doing the ride itself is so great," Peter says. "I know how much he is going to get out of it. James has been a big part of this because he has grown up with the Ride, so having him on the 20th ride is incredible to me," Peter says.

James was aged just three when his dad set off on the inaugural Hawaiian Ride for Youth. Twenty years on, he understands why the cause is so important – and what youth mental health struggles can be like, having experienced panic attacks as a teenager.

"It was a really hard time, but eventually I got more confidence to talk about it and to get through it," James recalls.

"It's hard being a kid sometimes. Those ages of 12 to 18 can be really hard and it is important kids know there are services and people out there who can support and help them. Talking about what you're going through is just so important.

"I am of the generation of millennials who are probably a lot better about talking about mental health. I really can relate to many of the things they are going through. It is just so important that Youth Focus can offer these services."

The father and son team are looking forward to completing the 20th anniversary Hawaiian Ride for Youth together. Asked why they are taking part in the 2022 Hawaiian Ride for Youth they replied:

Peter: "To watch our Hawaiian Ride for Youth community of like-minded people grow each year."

James: "For the good it can do - for me and for the community."

Peter and James Trench

Hawaiian Ride for Youth Heritage Riders