

INSIDE:

An inspirational story from ultramarathon runner and Stroke Foundation board member, Mark Ford.

RENEWING HOPE

AUTUMN 2022

NEWS

On July 1, 2020, Blenheim local Paula Taylor returned home from work, after a tough day dealing with a splitting migraine.

"I kept taking more Panadol, but eventually I ended up in tears from the pain. I rang my husband, who told me that I should stop being a champ about it and take a sick day," she says.

Barely five minutes after returning home, however, Paula was yelling from her bedroom for an ambulance.

My life is very different now, but through this experience, I feel I have gained more than I have lost.

Paula Taylor

"I felt a pain in my skull that I had never experienced before, or since, like someone had placed a hot poker right on top of my head!" she recalls.

As she tried to prop herself up on her bed, Paula realised that her entire right side was weak. Her husband, Phil, who had rushed into the bedroom, asked why her face was drooping towards the right. Paula tried to answer him, but her speech was all jumbled up.

At that moment, Paula realised that she was having a stroke, as she clearly remembered the F.A.S.T. (face drooping, arm weakness and speech difficulties) acronym for early identification of strokes.

The hospital in Blenheim diagnosed Paula with an intracerebral haemorrhagic stroke, or bleeding



Paula Taylor from Blenheim, New Zealand.

in the brain from a burst artery. Over the next seven weeks, Paula stayed at the hospital, with her entire right side initially paralysed.

"The rehab was really hard, you know, just being in a situation where you are having to learn to walk again," she shares. Paula also experienced a major setback after being discharged from the hospital, falling, and breaking a rib on her second day back home.

"When I was finally back home for good, fatigue was

Story continues inside

[INSIDE: RENEWING HOPE](#) | [MARK'S STORY](#) | [INTRODUCING HE TAONGA](#) | [SPECIAL PARTNERSHIP WITH ED&I BODY](#) | [BEANIE UP BACK FOR FOURTH YEAR](#)

HEAR FROM EMILY MAY



*Emily May,
Community Stroke
Advisor, Marlborough.*

"When I first contacted Paula after starting in my role, she was in a challenging place – having just crossed the first anniversary since the stroke that changed her life. This is often a difficult time for most stroke survivors, as it dawns on many of them that they still have a long way to go in their recovery.

As Community Stroke Advisors (CSAs), when we visit people in their homes it is so vital to simply listen to their stories.

After a long conversation with Paula, I identified some key areas where Paula was facing difficulties – particularly in managing her fatigue and daily routine.

As her fatigue made it hard to sustain a healthy diet and lifestyle, I recommended some tips on breaking down her day into manageable steps.

I also recommended to Paula that she only have one key focus each day, instead of an overwhelming to-do list.

My job as CSA involves putting things into perspective for my clients. For Paula, that meant reminding her of the incredible progress she'd made – from the early challenging months to where she is now.

That perspective works both ways though, as we also acknowledge the struggles that stroke survivors and their families go through.

Every survivor has days they feel sorry for themselves, but those emotions are a valid part of the recovery journey. It is important to remind them that they don't have to stay strong all the time and to ask for support when they need it.

With Paula, most of my input was giving her a dash of courage or support to take the next plunge – she's an inspirational woman!"

From front page

hitting me hard. I strategically placed some chairs along our farm outside Blenheim, so that I could have a rest between walks," says Paula with a laugh.

The reality of the stroke, however, was no laughing matter at the time.

"I found myself being depressed slightly, and unable to adjust to this new person whom I was unfamiliar with," Paula says.

Paula withdrew from social settings and said that she didn't interact with many people. Meeting our local Community Stroke Advisor at the time, Emily May, however, changed Paula's perspective.

Paula's an inspirational woman and it's so rewarding for me seeing how she has progressed!

Emily May, Community Stroke Advisor

"Emily came to see me and put in place a basic plan on how I could get out and about more, while also connecting me to the local stroke club's swimming sessions, which have been incredible for my recovery," she remembers with gratitude.

Seeing that there were no social groups locally for young stroke survivors, such as herself, Paula has started a popular coffee catch-up in Blenheim.

Beyond swimming sessions with her local stroke club, Paula goes to a weekly movement class, walks and has sessions with an "excellent" neuro-physiotherapist.

Despite the incredible improvements she has made over the past 15 months, Paula still walks with a limp, her fingers clamp up when she is fatigued, and she gets migraines occasionally. She also experiences short-term memory loss, and her speech can get jumbled from time to time.

"At times I think, 'Do I need to keep doing all this?'. Then I have a bad day, and suddenly I'm glad I kept it going!" she says about regulating her time and expectations during recovery.

Despite all this, Paula reflects, "When you have a stroke, you realise what's truly important. It's your quality of life and the people you have around you. My life is very different now, but through this experience, I feel I have gained more than I have lost."



CEO'S MESSAGE

After two exceptional years of holding back the COVID-19 tide, New Zealand's resistance has finally been cracked by the Omicron variant. As we wait to crest the peak of the current outbreak, we are looking towards the government reforms that will see the 20 DHBs disappear on 1 July to be replaced by two new entities, Health New Zealand, and the Māori Health Authority.

In preparing for these changes, we are increasing our advocacy work to ensure that stroke prevention and life after stroke services are front and centre in the new national health plans. When we consider that up to 75% of strokes are preventable, through improved health and wellbeing, we need to be asking hard questions about how we can reverse the tide of stroke and reduce this heavy burden on all aspects of our society.

One area where everyone can take personal responsibility (myself included as a self-confessed foodie) is by reducing salt in our diet. Recent research commissioned by the Stroke Foundation identifies the unacceptably high levels of salt in pre-packaged and processed foods. Salt is a leading cause of high blood pressure, which in turn is a leading cause of stroke.



Although the traffic light settings mean we must adjust our normal way of working, it does not mean our work at the Foundation has ground to a halt. In fact, far from it. Our dedicated teams continue to provide a full range of prevention and Life After Stroke services, supporting the people who need us most throughout New Zealand. As you will have read in Paula's story, our CSAs are always here to support our clients regardless of what is thrown at them.

At the end of May, it will be one year since I picked up the CEO reins from Mark Vivian, and I would like to acknowledge the incredible work of everyone at the Foundation. It is my honour to serve our front-line teams, and the stroke affected community of Aotearoa. Most importantly, I am very grateful for your support of our mission to prevent strokes, improve outcomes, and save lives.

Ngā mihi,

Jo Lambert
Chief Executive Officer

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT LEAVING A GIFT IN YOUR WILL?



After you have provided for your whānau and the special people in your life, a bequest is one way to leave a legacy without impacting your financial needs during your lifetime. If you decide to make a bequest to the Stroke Foundation, you, like others before you, will enable us to continue vital work for people recovering from a stroke, while also helping to reduce the number of strokes in New Zealand each year.

Please contact Mark Vivian, our Bequests Ambassador, to discuss your wishes.

Mark Vivian, Bequests Ambassador mark.vivian@stroke.org.nz **027 666 1603**

MARK'S STORY

In the early hours of the 6th of February 2019, Mark Ford woke up from a deep sleep feeling like he had a lot of fluid inside his nose. As he lurched forward to go to the bathroom, however, he hit the deck and had a seizure.

An extremely fit person and avid ultramarathon runner, Mark had gone to bed at 9:00 pm, fit and healthy, only to suffer an ischaemic stroke sometime between then and 1:30 am.

An undiagnosed small hole in Mark's heart had allowed a clot to enter the bloodstream and lodge in his brain.

When he arrived at the hospital after 2:00 am, Mark's symptoms took hold. He was immediately paralysed along the entire left side of his body, lost his ability to speak and swallow, had trouble keeping his eyes open and was stricken by severe migraines.

The 41-year-old spent four weeks in various hospitals, including the specialised stroke unit in Christchurch's Burwood Hospital. He credits the incredible team of physios and therapists at Burwood Hospital for pushing him as hard as he could to make a strong recovery.

Mark calls his rehab at Burwood a "training program", with 20 hours of personalised support every week for him to get closer to his old self. On the last day of his stay at Burwood Hospital, Mark distinctly remembers moving his left arm for the first time in weeks.

About three months after his initial stroke, Mark slowly began to experience sensations returning to his left side. Remarkably, within five months of his stroke, he started doing one of his favourite hobbies again – running.

Despite these giant leaps forward, Mark says his road to recovery has been painstaking, with him having to relearn how to do many things that he took for granted – from tying his laces or buttoning a shirt to typing on a keyboard and learning to drive.

Getting his driving license back again, Mark says, was akin to reclaiming his life and independence. Initially told that he may never drive again, Mark



A dad to a kid is almost superhuman, indestructible. So, it was pretty horrible for my children to see me knocked down like that after the stroke.

Mark Ford

taught himself by religiously playing a simulator videogame on his computer. In 2020, he passed his driving assessment on his second attempt.

Mark's road to recovery continues to this day, with him admitting that he still doesn't have dexterity in his fingers, that his speech sometimes slurs, and that fatigue continues to consume him at the end of long days.

Mark is extremely grateful for his partner, Keryn, and his two loving children, Tayla and Kobe, who were 8 and 6 at the time of his stroke.

"A dad to a kid is almost superhuman, indestructible. So, it was pretty horrible for my children to see me knocked down like that after the stroke. My sole focus was getting better, for them," says a reflective Mark.

"My wife said to me right at the start, 'Do what you have to do to recover, you are the priority', which gave me the green light to immerse myself fully in recovering. Sometimes, I took that self-focus too far, and it almost felt maniacal," says Mark.

The hardest part of recovering, Mark says, was holding onto the memory of who he was before the

Story continues over

PEDALLING FOR STROKE

On March 19, Lauren and Greg Cayford reached Bluff, having cycled 3,013 kilometres from Cape Reinga in support of the Stroke Foundation and to raise awareness of Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA), also known as a mini-stroke.

The Christchurch-based family wanted to give back to the Stroke Foundation as it was our Community Stroke Advisors who supported Lauren's mum, Heather, when she experienced a TIA in 2018.

In Greg's own words, "The ongoing support from the Foundation was unbelievable, just really good! We wanted to honour that support and give back!"

This incredible dad and daughter duo have raised more than \$11,000 on their journey to support the Stroke Foundation's services so that we can continue to help people like Heather on their journey following a stroke.

We are incredibly grateful for their support.



Mark's story, from previous page

stroke and grieving about that loss. Once you move past that, however, Mark says the possibilities are endless.

Today, Mark Ford is a member of the Board of the Stroke Foundation and says that he is thrilled that our charity focuses on encouraging survivors to recover, in their own way, through our community support teams.

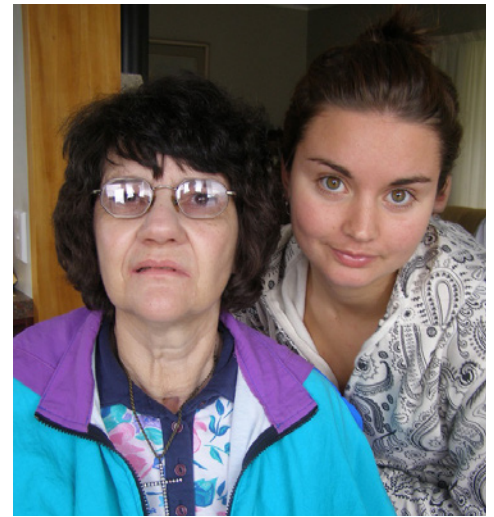
In early-2021, Mark completed the 33-kilometre Coast to Coast mountainous marathon (as pictured). He is also back to working full-time at Fulton Hogan as an executive manager.

Mark defines his mantra for life as being powered by encouragement and choosing not to be a victim. Instead of asking "Why me?", Mark's response is, "Why not me?"

SPECIAL PARTNERSHIP WITH ED&I BODY

You may have seen on the last season of Celebrity Treasure Island that Edna Swart chose to donate her winnings to the Stroke Foundation of New Zealand. Edna was only 17 years old when her mother, Sandra Swart, died from complications related to a major stroke.

On February 1, the Stroke Foundation began a special partnership with Edna and her body and face care brand, ed&i body. During 2022, for every order placed on the ed&i body website, Edna will donate \$1 to the Stroke Foundation. If you would like to check out the ed&i body product range, head here: www.edniswimwear.com



The money raised through this partnership will be used to develop tools for young people impacted by stroke, increase stroke prevention awareness and support our Community Stroke Advisor service.



BEANIE UP WITH THE STROKE FOUNDATION!

For the fourth year running, the Stroke Foundation will be encouraging New Zealanders to “Beanie Up” this winter to raise funds for our critical services for stroke survivors, their whānau and carers. Thousands of kind-hearted Kiwis supported our campaign last year by purchasing a beanie or getting involved to sell them to friends and coworkers.

This year, we’re excited to launch new, on-trend designs, including a limited-edition beanie by Edna Swart which will be available for purchase on her website (with all sales proceeds going towards our services). The beanies will be available from mid-June 2022, so head over to www.beanieup.co.nz for more information!

SUPPORT US

DONATE ONLINE

To donate securely online by credit card, simply follow this link: stroke.org.nz/donate

AUTOMATIC PAYMENT

To set up an automatic payment, use the details below:

Registered name: Stroke Foundation of New Zealand

Account number: 02 1269 0023111 01

MONTHLY GIVING

To set up monthly donations, get in touch with our new Regular Giving Coordinator, Georgina, on 04 815 8974 or visit stroke.org.nz/give-monthly

THANK YOU!

National Office, PO Box 12482, Wellington 6144
0800 STROKE (0800 78 76 53) / strokenz@stroke.org.nz / stroke.org.nz



#FIGHTSTROKE