

HEARTKIDS VICTORIA

BENDIGO BRANCH NEWS

Hello, my name is Kate Nester and I would like to introduce myself and my family to you. I am the HeartKids contact in the Bendigo region. My HeartKid is a beautiful 12 year old girl called Sophie Louise. I also have a healthy 9 year old son called Todd and together with my husband, Gezza, we live on a 20 acre property 12 minutes out of Bendigo. We have 3 ponies, 3 dogs, 1 cat, 1 lamb, 36 chooks and a ferret.

Sophie's heart condition was first diagnosed at the 18 week ultra sound when we were strongly advised to terminate the pregnancy. Fortunately, we had a very supportive cardiologist (Dr T.H. Goh) who had the same faith in God as us and supported us to keep going. She may have had a rough start to life but the last 6 years have been a lot easier I am happy to say.

She has had three open heart operations. The first was when she was only 20 hours old, the second when she was 15 months old and the third (which was the Fontan) when she was 5 years old. Fortunately, she has kept very well over the last 6 years with only a couple of minor hospital stays. The last one was 2 years ago when she had to have some minor dental work done. A simple filling and she was in hospital for one week.

Unfortunately, Sophie has other health issues as well. Her mild form of Spina Bifida has caused weakness in muscles to her bladder, bowel, hips, calf muscles and both feet. She has had three operations on her feet and still wears splints which create a few problems for her. She is also incontinent and suffers extreme constipation if not managed correctly.

She does a lot of horse riding, bike riding and swimming. She is learning to play the flute and is involved with the school choir and multi instrumental group. She also enjoys singing and dancing. She is a very happy child and has an extremely positive attitude to everything she does. Sophie has been so keen to meet other Heartkids and has very much enjoyed attending her first ever Heart Throb camp this year!!!

As a parent with a very busy lifestyle, trying to fit a part-time job in around the busy school and sporting commitments, I understand how difficult it is to fit anything else in. However, I am very aware of how important it is to support each other and keep in touch with other families who also have a child with a heart condition. Being a member of HeartKids has been wonderful for me. So my desire is to get everyone together and try to establish a really supportive group in Bendigo. Our branch is hoping to meet on the first Sunday of each month. I have only met 3 other families at this stage, so if you live in the Bendigo region and have or are expecting a heart child, then please feel encouraged to call me. We will all benefit from sharing our stories and thoughts and just getting together for a chat. So please contact me on (03) 5449 3992 after 8pm or 0437 680 335. I look forward to hearing from you soon!!

Cheers, Kate

