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How to change your community, your society, and your thinking

Presentation by

Kathy Kelly

motivational speaker

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About the presentation:

Trauma cast its shadow indiscriminately: bad things can happen to the best of us. But what if the trauma is inflicted deliberately? If your life were changed forever by tragic yet entirely preventable events, it would be understandable if you were to react with anger, blame or a desire for retribution. What would it take for you to focus instead on education, solutions and systemic improvements to ensure that nobody else need suffer the same grief?

Kathy Richardson

It's now my very great pleasure to introduce a woman who epitomises the word courage. At 10:25 on a Saturday night in 2012 Kathy Kelly received the phone call that every parent dreads. Four years later the tragedy was compounded even further. The preventable death of Kathy's two sons left her determined to make a difference. Through advocacy, prevention and education, she started a movement that would bring changes to the New South Wales judicial system, and new liquor licensing legislation. Her focus now is on developing leading programs to reduce teenage suicide. For Kathy, the key was turning her grief into determination to create change. She didn't give in to it, she moved forward. Please make Kathy very welcome.

The presentation began with a video.

Stuart Kelly

Good evening, first lady Lucy Turnbull, New South Wales Premier Mike Baird; New South Wales Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione; New South Wales Attorney-General Gabrielle Upton; Lord Mayor of Sydney Clover Moore; ladies and gentlemen, friends and family. My name is Stuart Kelly. I'm Thomas's younger brother.

I was 14 years old when Tom was brutally attacked without reason, resulting in him losing his life. Tom was out with his friends. It was his first night out in Sydney. We were at home in Bowral, doing what many families do on a Saturday night, watching TV and getting ready for bed. The phone rang at 10:25pm. Mum answered it, but couldn't comprehend what the person was telling her, so she passed the phone to Dad. The voice on the end of the phone told him that they need to come to St Vincent's Hospital urgently. Mum and Dad told my sister Madeleine and I that Tom had been in an altercation. They had to drive up to Sydney to be with him, but probably would be back later during the night. We had absolutely no idea of the extent of Tom's injuries. The person from the hospital would not give any further information, except to firmly ask that we come straight to the hospital.

Maddy and I stayed at home. It was late, so we went to bed. On Sunday morning, Mum's sister Kerry called, telling us she was driving down to

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Bowral from Sydney to pick us both up. I felt really uneasy. I couldn't understand why Kerry would be coming and not our parents. Waiting at home I thought about what might have happened to Tom. Never did I think or imagine that we might lose our brother. I remember walking in to the foyer at St Vincent's Hospital around midday on that Sunday. The foyer was bustling with people. As we made our way to the lifts I was trying to work out what was going on and why we were there. Madelaine had even brought up her school books with her to study as she was stressed about her upcoming HSC trial examinations.

We took the lift to the fourth floor where Mum and Dad met us. They took us into a small room, closing the door. I could tell by the look on their faces that something serious had happened. I thought this was really strange as we were not visiting Tom. Nothing was making any sense to me. Finally, Dad said to us, "Thomas has been badly hurt. The doctor's want to explain it to the both of you." I felt uneasy. We waited for what seemed to be a very long time, but probably wasn't. Two doctors came in with a social worker. We all sat down. I was feeling scared and anxious, and I was about to find out why. "Your brother Thomas is in a critical condition, and will not survive." I was being told to prepare for his death.

Those few words would change our lives forever. I don't remember too much more of what they said. I was in shock and total disbelief. I heard those terrible words, but was feeling that this could not be real, this could not be happening to Tom. I could not process this as our reality. I look back at that moment, I was 14 years old, I was told by a stranger that my brother, my best friend, was going to die. I'm now 17, that was three years ago, however I carry a deep scar that you cannot see. It's always there, it never leaves. It sits below the surface of your skin, and surfaces when you least expect it.

The last time that I had seen Tom alive was at a Wallabies game against Wales on the 23rd of June. We had so much fun, lots of banter between the two of us, laughing at the Welsh accents, trying to imitate them. It was a great afternoon, but now it is a memory caught in time, a memory of my final time with Tom. It is a memory that we should have continued to enjoy, and many more, as we continued to grow up and grow old

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together. Thomas never deserved to die that night. It was not meant to be his time. In fact, I believe now that it could and should have been avoided. Our family lost a son and a brother. I ask all of you to look at me. I am but one person who's been affected by violence. It's a sentence that I have to carry for the rest of my life. My mother, father and sister now carry this sentence. Our relatives and friends, Tom's friends, carry this sentence.

We are not alone. There are many, many thousands of others who are directly affected by senseless violence every year. Today, I'm preparing to complete Year 12 at The King's School, with my HSC only weeks away. My graduation is this Friday. I still remember sitting in Futter Hall with my parents and Madeleine watching Tom graduate. Now it's my turn. How will I feel when the Headmaster shakes my hand? I want to ask all of you in this room right now to think of your children, or the children of someone special that you may know. Would you want them to be here on this stage right now, making this speech? It's time for change. Action is needed through strong leadership from the New South Wales state government and the Federal government. Action is needed by our friends and our families, across all of our communities. Change to stop the growing epidemic of drug and alcohol abuse and misuse, and to say no to senseless violence. Premier, will you make this promise tonight?

Australia is an alcoholic. We need to rethink the way we drink. Tonight, your involvement and your voice can and will make a difference. To finish, I would like to read a short poem that my father read at Thomas's funeral. It's a stark message to us all. It's titled, 'The guy in the glass'.

'When you get all you want and you struggle with health,
And the world makes you king for a day,
Then go to the mirror and look at yourself,
And see what the man has to say.
For it isn't your mother, your father, or wife,
Whose judgment upon you must pass,
But the man whose verdict counts most in your life,



Is the one staring back from the glass.
He's the fellow to please, never mind all the rest,
For he's with you right to the end,
When you pass your most difficult test,
It's the man in the glass who's your friend.
You may be like Jack Horner and chisel a plum,
And think you're a wonderful guy,
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum,
If you can't look him straight in the eye.
You can fool the whole world down the highway of years,
And take pats on the back as you pass,
But your final reward will be heartache and tears,
If you cheated the man in the glass.'

Thank you.

Kathy Richardson

Keep the round of applause going for Stuart Kelly, everybody.

Kathy Kelly

I'm Thomas and Stuart Kelly's mum, and I'd like to thank Cathy for her lovely introduction, but I must say, my husband Ralph is here with us today, and all those lovely things she said about me were really about him. He is the one that fought through his grief to start what we have, and are doing today, and I've just been there supporting him along the way and speaking where I can and sharing our story so that we can try and make a difference.

Our eldest son, Thomas, stepped out of a taxi on his very first night out in Sydney in 2012. He was holding a pretty girl's hand on his way to a friend's 18th birthday party. Within a couple of minutes another 18-year-old man stepped away from the darkened wall that he was leaning against, only a few metres in front of Tom. Without any confrontation, or any words spoken, he strode over and hit Thomas in the face, resulting in him cracking his skull on the pavement, and Tom's life was literally taken from us at that very moment.



That beautiful man that you just heard speaking is our youngest son, Stuart. I hadn't heard his speech until he delivered it that night at our Foundation's fundraising dinner in September 2015. It was a speech that made its way into the media nationwide, and it was a powerful speech. A powerful message to communities and our government's. It was heartbreaking to finally hear Stuart's underlying pain from losing his brother. He left myself, our family and friends, and an audience of over 750 guests in tears. Speaking out like this was really unnatural for Stuart. He didn't enjoy any of those presentations you do in English at school, so this was really quite an accomplishment for a 17-year-old.

I'd like to share our journey with you now in the hope that you can take away something to do to bring about change. I think that alone, our voice may not be loud enough, but together, we can really be a force to be reckoned with. Madeleine and Stuart didn't like to talk about Tom, and they would pretend he was away on a gap year, and busy themselves with studies, their sport, and their friends. 22 months ago, Stuart took his life. Now, Madeleine doesn't talk about Tom or Stuart. The ripple effect that Thomas's murder in 2012 has had on our family has all but destroyed us. To this day, we're still in disbelief. Not for one moment did we believe that Stuart's life would come to this. Losing both our boys at the same age of 18 and a half is just incomprehensible.

I'm not going to pretend that everything's okay, because it isn't, but when Thomas was murdered, I often thought, why him? I was just 51 years old at the time, and I thought, I have had a fortunate life. I've been in love, I'm married, I had three beautiful children, and surely it should have been me instead of Tom, whose adult life, the one he would take responsibility for, had only just begun. But now, having lost both Tom and Stu, there are many, many days that I just don't want to be here. Why have we had to endure such immense loss, not just once, but twice? But Ralph and I still have our gorgeous 22-year-old daughter, Madeleine, and I have to say that we try to stay strong for her, and live our lives not just for her, but for the memory and love of her brothers and our sons.

As the weeks passed when we lost Thomas, we started to reach out to people to try and understand how this could happen to him. We met as many people as we could, and no one seemed to want to turn us away.



One of the first meetings that Ralph had was with the previous New South Wales Police Commissioner, Andrew Scipione, who told him that we have the third largest police force in the western world, with an annual budget of \$3.4 billion dollars, and 70% of their resources were tied up with violence.

He said “We cannot arrest our way out of this. We need the community to step up and demand change.” This, and the many other meetings, particularly those with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, saw our group grief turn from anger, and then into determination.

This was the beginning of our fight for advocacy for change and for preventative programs. When we looked at the harms of alcohol on our health, we discovered it causes obesity, depression, and cancer, among many other things - alcohol-related cancers result in more deaths than does melanoma, and drinking excessive amounts of alcohol also increases the risk of breast cancer. In addition to this we also see alcohol being responsible for violence and accidents. How many times do we hear about our youth falling off balconies when they go away to schoolies?

These are just a couple of the statistics. If you look at victims of domestic violence, there's 24,000. 20,000 victims of child abuse. 175,000 hospitalisations. 5,500 deaths, which equates to 15 deaths per day. 95% of Australian households are affected by alcohol, and the cost nationally is \$15 billion. So, I think, as Stuart said, it's time that we rethink the way that we drink.

So, in September 2013 we launched the Thomas Kelly Youth Foundation, as a legacy to our son Thomas. At its heart, the Foundation's prime purpose is to ensure all of our youth are safe.

We're not about not drinking, but about educating people around responsible drinking, the harms of excessive amounts of alcohol, and the cost to our society. Poor decisions could result in any one of us becoming an offender or a victim.

Our children need to think about the consequences of their actions, and as parents and mentors to these children we need to be motivated and active role models.



Our Foundation has a number of youth ambassadors working with the Foundation. Two of them are incredible young people who are giving back to their communities. Chris Lee was also a victim of violence in King's Cross. Chris co-founded an educational group in New South Wales called the conviction group, and Chris and his team run an annual workshop across Sydney to male students from Year 10. They discuss all the issues that relate to young men's health, from steroids and body image to violence, alcohol, and all the things that might be starting to become a part of their lives. It's a fantastic program which always has a very broad and down-to-earth group of speakers.

Rebecca Stokes was attacked while out with some friends at a pub in Queensland. She's been through years of rehabilitation and has been unable to return to work full-time. She runs an annual fundraising event through her gym, the Crossfit gym, and she supports our Foundation enormously. The event she supports is called Lifting Above Violence. Last year the Brisbane Broncos and Gold Coast Titans both took part in this wonderful event, reaching out to the community to rid violence from their everyday lives.

Another young life lost was that of David Cassai in Victoria. I'm not sure if you'd remember, but he was killed by a one-punch attack in Rye on New Year's Eve in the very same year as Thomas. We've come to know David's mother, Caterina Politi, quite well, and she's been a very active member of your community working with government to bring about change. These tragedies bring us together with beautiful, sad and wonderful people.

One moment has connected us forever - one that all of us wish we had never experienced.

Thomas was known as TK amongst his friends at school. Whilst we were on a family holiday one year, he made the initials in the sand that you can see there on the left of the photo.

Maddy, his sister, put Tom's thongs next to that little sandpile and took a photo of them. Our message is gaining momentum through our brand, Take Kare, and we spell Kare with a K, taking on his initials. Who would have thought that this innocent photograph would become our platform to create change?



Some of the milestones that the Foundation has reached, some of the areas that we have advocated for, have been a result of the injustice that we found during the years we went through the New South Wales courts. As a result of Thomas's case we've made amendments to the Sentencing Act, and in three key areas.

- **The One Punch Law** (and I know you have a similar law in Victoria) now has our youth speaking about this, and although it's similar to manslaughter, they now understand that if someone dies as a result of their actions in New South Wales that brings a minimum sentence of eight years, with a maximum of 25. It's really very important that our young people are starting to talk about this, because it gives them the ultimatum: "If I'm responsible, I will spend time in prison."
- **Victim impact statements** are now able to be taken into account in sentencing. When we were going through the Supreme Court in New South Wales the offender's defense counsel was permitted to submit as many character references as they wished, which were then considered by the judge when he passed sentence, and victim impact statements were not allowed to be considered. Today family victim impact statements can also be taken into account. It provides a somewhat fairer justice system for the victims.
- **Non-domestic violent assault when under the influence of alcohol will no longer be seen as an excuse.** In Thomas's case, at sentencing we were shocked to hear that the offender was intoxicated, that if he were not under the influence of alcohol at the time he probably wouldn't have done it, and that was a mitigating factor - an excuse. We met with the Attorney General who agreed to move non-domestic assaults to neutral. Alcohol is still not an aggravating factor, which is what it should be- and alcohol has still been left as a mitigating factor in domestic violence cases, so it's still sometimes an excuse. How can we expect to see cultural change if people are not accountable for their actions?

We also began a financial hardship program. After we lost Thomas, Ralph found that he couldn't work. He had his own business, which was being greatly affected by the fact that he could not concentrate, and we found ourselves financially stretched as the bills kept coming in while he put all his efforts into creating change by focusing on the Foundation, working seven days a week.



After two to three years going through the New South Wales courts we were almost bankrupt. We met several other families, and we subconsciously realised that every one of them were in a similar position. A loss that is so great affects you not only emotionally, physically and mentally, but it can ruin you, and usually does ruin you financially. So, we knew that something more could be done to support victims who were going through these dreadful situations.

We met with the New South Wales Attorney-General, and we put forward our suggestions on how we could help victims financially. In March 2016, the Financial Hardship Package was introduced, with over 5,000 families assisted since its implementation.

The victims are allocated a person to provide them with support, to assist them wherever there is a debt, setting up payment plans or a grace period until the family gets back on their feet, and that is so important. It may not seem so, but when you're in that position where you have to ring your local council for the third time because you can't pay your water rates and whatever, and they say, you know, "I'm kind of sick of hearing from you" ... In Ralph's case, he approached the ATO, because he had built up quite a large tax debt, and the person on the other end of the phone said, "I don't care if your son's been murdered, you've got to pay your tax bills."

This sort of program really will help people enormously, and we're very proud of that.

Finally, there's the introduction of the Take Kare Safe Space Program, which I'll discuss further in a moment. Additionally, we've implemented 11 CCTV cameras in King's Cross.

We've been instrumental in media awareness campaigns to reduce violence in our society. Changes to liquor legislation in New South Wales from February 2014, with the introduction of a number of laws around licensing, have had a significant impact on reducing violence. We've also partnered with three universities now - the University of New South Wales, who are evaluating the success of the Safe Space Program; UTS, who are developing further programs for the Foundation; and most recently Ralph has been involved with another university in western Sydney where we're looking at having a number of their paramedics coming as part of their training to assist on the Safe Space.

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Of course, we've also done some work with programs for schools, community groups, and corporate education.

The Take Kare Safe Space began in December 2014, and we commenced the first space in Sydney near the Town Hall. Our Take Kare ambassadors are predominantly volunteers, and they work through the night every Friday and Saturday night helping get our youth home safely. They hand out water. They give things to young women wandering on the streets in bare feet because they can't walk in their high heels anymore, which is not very safe. They help with directions and transport and provide a place to sober up, and even charge people's mobile phones. Sometimes they've saved someone from sexual assault, and in some cases they've saved lives.

We currently operate in three spaces - next to the Town Hall, as I mentioned, Darling Harbour, and King's Cross - and at some point, it just would be amazing to see this program running nationally.

In just over three years the Safe Space Program has helped 60,000 young people. We call them 'sliding door' moments. It's the difference between these kids getting home safely or not. Countless sons and daughters have been spared of becoming victims of violent assaults, theft, and assaults like the one that took Thomas's life. BOCSAR, which is the Bureau of Crimes and Statistics Research released the following figures - a while ago now, but I think they're fairly similar now - and since January 2014 the monthly non-domestic violence in King's Cross has been reduced by 45%, and in the CBD, 20%. Mid-week reductions are as high as 93%, nearly 94%, and in the CBD, 57%.

With the changes to legislation from early 2014, the implementation of the Safe Space Program, and the introduction of the Sydney lockout laws, there has not been a single death at Sydney's busiest emergency department at St Vincent's Hospital due to a serious brain injury admission.

When Thomas was killed in 2012 neurosurgeons were on standby every single weekend because of the violence, with facial reconstruction surgeons coming in on Monday, and this of course was stopping ongoing surgeries for other people who needed them.



We then questioned how many lives had been saved at St Vincent's Hospital since those changes came into play, and Professor Gordian Fulde, who has only just recently retired as the Director of Emergency at St Vincent's (and was the 2016 Senior Australian of the Year), said that based on the results from previous years there would have been a minimum of 20 to 40 patients that did not present.

Then we looked at the cost of a serious brain injury, and we were told that it was an astounding \$5.4 to \$12 million per patient (that covers the cost of surgeries, rehabilitation, hospitalisation and lifelong injuries). If you take the minimum of those patients - 20 people, say, that didn't present - and the minimum cost of \$5 million dollars per patient, it results in a saving to the community of approximately \$100 million.

Behavioural change is definitely a long-term process, and it's essential for all of our children to be able to go out and enjoy themselves and return home safely. We can't do this alone. We need everyone's help. We need you to make informed and sensible decisions when out drinking. It will take many, many years, but we're starting to see the beginning of cultural change. We need people to take care of themselves, and of each other.

The New South Wales state government introduced amendments to the liquor legislation laws in February 2014, commonly referred to as the lockout laws. In February 2016 the New South Wales government began the process of reviewing the results.

These laws were brought about as a result of Thomas's death, and that of Daniel Christie, another 18-year-old, a year later. The community had had enough of violence on our streets

Our innocent son was murdered, without any confrontation, as he stepped out of a taxi and was punched in the face moments later. Two days later we were told to turn off his life support. Our other children were just 14 and 17 years old. We were then subjected to three years in court, from the local court to the High Court of Australia.

People soon forgot what we had been through, however. As a result, our family came under intense scrutiny.



Three prominent businessmen who did not support the lockdown laws were behind a number of blogs and vile, untrue articles published online and in a prominent Sydney newspaper. We had death threats. "Let's kill off the rest of the Kelly dogs." "What about that scum, Ralph Kelly." "Look at them, trying to be famous. Thomas would be rolling over in his grave," and, "Stuart Kelly is a political puppet."

In February 2016, whilst all this was going on, Stuart commenced at St Paul's, a residential college located on the grounds of the University of Sydney. Fairfax media was investigating the false allegations. They put Stuart's speech that you saw today online, and it was the very day that Stuart started orientation week at the university. Even though Fairfax were trying to help, our darling Stuart was unfortunately under fire from his peers from the moment he stepped on to the grounds of the college. 18-to-25 year olds are the main segment affected by the lockdown laws. They are angry, they feel that their rights to drink 24 hours a day have been selfishly taken away from them. The very laws designed to protect them would eventuate in Stuart taking his life.

Stuart called us twelve hours after we had left him in his new residence. We missed his first few calls, but later that afternoon he rang again and asked us to come and collect him from outside Royal Prince Alfred's medical centre.

Immediately I was worried, and I asked if he was okay, but he said, "Just come and get me." We arrived to find him sitting in the gutter with his head in his hands. He got in our car and he sobbed uncontrollably. I hadn't seen him cry like that since Thomas' life support was switched off. We drove home, as we knew we had to get him somewhere where he felt safe. We tried and tried over the next few weeks to ask him what had happened. To this day, however, we still don't know. Even though we know it was suicide, the coroner is still investigating the case.

What happened to our son that night that would take him away from his dream at The King's School to go to Sydney University and live at St Paul's College, and see him retreat to his room for the next two to three months. We believe something catastrophic happened to Stuart that night, and although we may never get an answer, I'm sure we will both die trying to find out. Stuart had never shown a day of depression in his life.



I know that he must have been suffering silently for the loss of his brother, his best friend, but he had the most extraordinary life at The King's School. He was there for six years as a boarder, and in his final year he was the head of his boarding house - the largest in the school- he was selected as a school prefect, one of 25 out of a cohort of 225 boys, and he had loads of friends.

He was a leader, and he innocently took a stance against violence at that dinner when he was old enough to make that choice. He called me from school after the Crown appeal was heard in Supreme Court - he was only 16 at the time - and he asked if he could address the press following the release of the findings when they were read in court. He wanted to take a stance for his brother, whom he loved and missed. He wanted kids his own age to know that things weren't okay, and that they needed to band together to bring about change. I have nothing but absolute admiration for that, and there was certainly no puppetry involved. Stuart only ever spoke for himself.

This slide shows the latest statistics of Australian suicide. It's absolutely appalling that we lose 3,500 loved ones every single year, which equates to eight deaths a day and an attempt every eight minutes. What's happening in our society that we have over 70,000 attempts of suicide nationally each year? We've learned since losing Stuart that 50% of the people who do take their lives don't seek medical intervention or speak out about their feelings. These people have events that occur that change their lives, possibly a major tragedy or a change in their cultural setting.

They are bullied or ridiculed. Some suffer monetary problems that seem insurmountable. Following that one night at St Paul's College, Stuart barely surfaced from his room. We were worried about him, of course, and sought advice from several people, but trying to force a young adult to seek medical advice is almost impossible.

We did see a professor at Head Space, without Stuart, and she advised us that we should help him find part-time work, not put too much pressure on him, and slowly encourage him to get out and reconnect with the world again. There was never any urgency in this meeting, though, or any suggestion that he might be in a place where he would consider taking his life.



He started working part-time at Royal North Shore Hospital three days a week, and he was coaching a rugby team at his old school twice-a-week. Up until the time of his death he was going to the gym six or seven-days-a-week. After a while Stuart began to talk about wanting to go overseas to London to study and restart his life (Ralph was born in the UK, and the children have both passports). He felt that he would never be accepted here, so he applied for several places and was offered a position at a university not far from London.

Two weeks before he took his life, Ralph and Stuart took our dog for a walk, and Stuart brought up the idea of going overseas again. Ralph said, "If we can manage it, we wouldn't want you to go unless you had some counselling, because we'd be so worried about you on the other side of the world." He looked at Ralph and said, "Look at me, Dad. I go to work without complaining in my rotten job, I love training my rugby boys, and I'm fit and I'm strong. Do I look like I need help?" And Ralph's response was, "No, you don't."

Stuart was unable to share his pain with us. At a doctor's appointment following Stuart's death, Ralph said to the doctor that he didn't think we really listened to Stuart, and the doctor told him two things that I think are really worth noting.

One is that he often asks young patients a question, and their parents jump in and answer for them. I know that I've done that when I've taken my children to the doctor. Another is that kids today don't speak about their problems with their parents, because they don't want to add to their burden of their already stressful lives.

So I think it's time we went back to basics. At least a couple of times a week, we need to sit around the table together, without our devices, and talk with each other, and truly listen. We need to ask our family how they feel. If we start doing that we will see that listening does save lives. You'll hear it over and over again; when somebody you know has taken their life, their family will say "I didn't see it coming." I know we certainly didn't.

I recently attended a lunch for Lifeline, and there were about 700 or 800 guests in the room, probably similar to today, and the CEO asked everyone to raise their hand if they had been touched by suicide. I'd like to ask you now if you would please raise your hand if you have been touched by suicide in any way.



I'd really like you to keep your hands up, and I'd like you to look around the room and see that there's probably not a table, or a row of chairs, without somebody who has been touched by suicide. This is truly an epidemic.

Early last year we were approached by the National Rugby League to set up a day to remember Stuart. That was held on the 23rd of July, almost a year to the day since we lost him. Whilst this was a really wonderful and caring gesture by the NRL, we felt that the day needed to have messages that the broader community could really relate to. We wanted to raise awareness about suicide, particularly in our youth, and to encourage everyone to speak up and to listen to those around us that really do need our support. One of our volunteers on the Safe Space came up with a concept of using Stuart's initials, as we had done with Thomas with Take Kare, and we agreed on Stay Kind.

Our partners for the event were the NRL, Lifeline, Channel 9, and the Parramatta Eels and the West Tigers (who played in the game). APN Outdoor Digital Billboards gave the Foundation national coverage valued at over \$2 million - they were extraordinary in the way that they supported us. Another family friend has an organisation called Airstar Australia, who supported us at all our events with their amazing eye-catching branded air balloons. The day was incredible, with more than double the normal crowd for that time in the competition. Not only did supporters of the teams come out on the day, but people from all areas of the community, and the crowd tipped over just over 30,000 people.

It was wonderful to see everybody get behind the day. We had some of the catering staff proudly wearing our logo, and our volunteers, as you can see there, were going around with those great balloons on their backs, asking people how they felt and wanting them to Stay Kind. Stay Kind is a simple message, but it's one we believe we all need to be reminded of. It's about all of us pulling together to show respect and to be kind to each other - with family, work colleagues, schools, universities, everyone. We need to understand that we need to treat people equally, regardless if they are struggling in some way or seem a little different to us. As a Foundation, but more so for our family, we were overwhelmed when both teams decided to change their jerseys for the day.



The West Tigers sponsors, Brydens Lawyers, were incredibly supportive, giving up their own logo on this occasion, and you can see that the Eels also proudly wore the Stay Kind on their jerseys.

My husband Ralph has always been a keen supporter of the Tigers. As a student of The King's School, however, which is around Parramatta in the same area of Sydney as the Eels, Stuart was an avid Eels supporter, even though they haven't done very well in the competition for a number of years, but an avid supporter, anyway, like his mum. It was a really exciting game that day, and in the last few minutes the score was 16-all. I'm not sure how or why it happened, but the Eels scored a field goal in the last few minutes, giving them the win for the first Stay Kind Cup. Stu would have been pretty happy with the result. We were thrilled to have this opportunity to start this important discussion at this particular event, to try to de-stigmatise the fact that people feel inferior if they are suffering in one way or another. We recently held our second Stay Kind day match in Easter of this year, with the same incredibly brave players, and it's now an annual match for the NRL, so we're very happy with that.

We need to really start thinking about how we change the stigma associated with depression, and about how we can try to encourage those suffering in silence to come forward and seek help.

As a community, we need to be more open about depression, bullying and suicide. If we begin to speak out about these issues, as the norm, those suffering won't necessarily feel ostracised and different from all of those people around them. On average, around one in six women, and one in eight men will experience some level of depression throughout their lives, so it's affecting a very large majority of us. Stay Kind now stands together with Take Kare, and Stuart supported the work of the Foundation and our mission to keep young people safe.

It's understandable that we may feel neglected or disrespected in today's society, but that's why it's so important to remember to be kind to each other and to take care of ourselves as well as those other people that we care for. If you're feeling overwhelmed, don't keep it to yourself. We need to change the way we react with one another.



This year we began a national campaign at that same rugby league match, and we've called it #StayKindConversations. There are approximately 24 million Australians in our country, so if we could all show at least one kind act per day, that would equate to 8,760,000,000 acts of kindness a year - a pretty big number there.

Imagine how, together, we can change the world with kindness. We can bring it in to our homes by telling our children what we did as parents that was kind that day. Simple things, like letting a car in front of us, smiling more, paying a favour forward, or being positive around our family or at work. Then maybe go home and ask your children what they did at school that day that was kind. Just try it. There are so many ways that we can all be kind. We met at a rugby league game last year, around Anzac Day, all of the Victoria Cross recipients, and one of them, of course, was Ben Roberts-Smith, and he walked over to Ralph and I and asked how he could help. It turned out Ben was cyber-bullied himself, and so Ben agreed to do a video around the message Stay Kind, so I'd just like to play that for you now.

Ben Roberts-Smith

People know me foremost for my prior role as an Australian Army soldier. My family has for several generations shared a vision of the importance of patriotism and the protection of the Australian people. Stay Kind resonates with me in relation to these values, and our family beliefs, and the importance of protecting our country and those who live in it. Stay Kind is about being selfless in caring for others, and it is also about being kind to yourself and seeking help from others. As a country, we have a strong mateship culture, yet we have one of the highest rates of youth suicide in the world, and it's the leading cause of death of young Australians. Something is wrong in our society for this to be happening.

Stay Kind promotes important community values that seem obvious but are often forgotten. It encourages you to Stay Kind to others, as you can never know what someone is feeling. The Stay Kind initiative encourages the community to be more intuitive in looking after our youth. It also encourages you to look after yourself, and to seek support if needed. We do care about you.



People may not know that I am also a father of two young girls, and often think about their journey ahead. Our young people face many difficult circumstances growing up today. The internet and social media has created what can be a harsh environment, and with big expectations of our young people, and as parents we must adapt our parenting skills to this rapidly changing world.

We need to be providing different support and care to our young people as they travel their path into adulthood. Often, young people do not have a great deal of confidence. They are grappling with how they fit in, what their place is in the world, and if they are good enough. I remember from my own experiences how the cruelty of others can have such a huge impact on your psyche.

Stay Kind encourages you to ask me how I feel and encourages you to really listen. A young person may not have the confidence to tell you they need help. The support that is probably one of the most critical for our youth is from loved ones, family, friends, and perhaps even team-mates. However, genuine care and a show of support really only comes from genuinely listening. Listening saves lives. Please, Stay Kind.

Kathy Kelly

We all face difficult, painful situations in our lives, professionally and personally. It's normal to feel negativity, to have fears that we are not good enough. Resilience is a term used to describe the psychological strength an individual has, which allows them to overcome and grow from crisis and the challenging situations which cause us to suffer.

Resilience is not about struggling alone. It's about the use and mobilisation of ordinary human processes, including positive emotions, trusted social support, optimism, and the use of our own authentic strengths to remain positive and successful when faced with adversity. We've been faced with two catastrophic events, and we are making positive changes with our wonderful partnerships.

Resilient employees cope well with ambiguity, treat setbacks as improvement opportunities, and develop meaningful, lasting connections with colleagues and stakeholders.



Each of you here today has the power to build something positive, inspire others, and ultimately come out successful, despite all the odds being stacked against you. I've spoken at a few schools, openly and honestly, about stories that teach resilience.

This is a group of Year 11 girls that I've spoken to the last couple of years for their leadership event. Many of them came along last year and supported us at the first Stay Kind day. We've also had the privilege to meet these incredibly resilient people who have also suffered, and they're proudly there wearing our Stay Kind, Take Kare wristbands.

Meeting and becoming friends with people such as the Morecombes, who lost their little boy, Daniel; Turia Pitt, from the dreadful fires in Western Australia; Louisa Hope from the Sydney siege; and closer to home, Noelle Dickson from Melbourne, whose daughter Sarah Cafferkey was brutally murdered in 2012 - meeting these wonderful people has been bittersweet. They are so incredibly inspiring, and they help each of us to hold each other up.

I also had the pleasure of meeting Prince Harry in June of last year - he was at a Government House meeting to meet the athletes who were going to compete in the Invictus Games. He graciously took a letter that I wrote about our boys, and our Foundations values-based programs. The work he is now doing with Prince William and the Duchess of Cambridge, Kate, is also values-based, and the Palace has handed a brief of our work directly to their organisation, Heads Together.

Take Kare and Stay Kind are values-based. We rarely, if ever, talk about coward punches, and our focus is about changing values around being healthy and keeping our children safe, changing the way we think for the better of others for a brighter future. Similarly, we don't talk about suicide. What goes before compassion, before resilience, that's what we talk about, and that's kindness.

Currently we have a kindness deficit in Australia. We talk about mateship, but people are so busy, and Australia believes that mateship is now waning. Without kindness being first, you cannot change people who bully, or haze, or are violent. It's time for a proactive change.



My generation, our generation, can start a movement that our children can grow up with as the norm.

I'd like to share a message that we received upon Stuart's death from Dr. Timothy Hawkes, the headmaster of the King's School, where our boys had graduated only seven months before we lost them both. He said

“Dear Ralph and Kathy, I cannot tell you how much my heart has been breaking for you over these last few days. I just don't have the words, so I will borrow from others. Ralph Waldo Emerson suggested that a successful life was to laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a better place, a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.

Stuart succeeded. Stuart left the world a better place. He fronted cameras when his natural disposition was not to. He endured the challenge, and even the betrayal, of those who did not support his mission of making Australia a safer place. As the coach of the Under 14 C's at Kings, he won the affection of children, and among his mentors and staff he also won the respect of intelligent people. Stuart appreciated beauty, and he could find the best in others. He had many wonderful mates. Your son has left the world in a healthier condition because of his support for measures to limit problem drinking. This has been transformative work, vital, dangerous, visionary. In every sense, Stuart succeeded, and you can be proud of him. Be assured of my thoughts and prayers,

With deep affection,
Tim.'

Our 18-year-old son, who had suffered so much, was seen by the head of his school, his mentors, his friends, and his family, to have had an impact on the community. Nothing should stop any one of us in this room today from showing up with intention and purpose to maximise every opportunity in our own lives.



You have to get up each day, and just place one foot in front of the other, and remember, if we each do our part with small acts of kindness, together as a community we will see big impacts. We would love you to get involved with our Foundation in any way that you can. If you're interested, please go to our website - just look up thomaskelly.com.au.

I'd like to leave you with one last thought. If you know someone in your life who has lost a child, please don't say, "How are you?" You don't have to say anything, just give them a hug. Thank you very much.

Kathy Richardson

Kathy, thank you. That was incredible. I don't know how you do it.

ENDS

MORE INFORMATION:

For reports, audio, transcripts and video from the 2018 Communities in Control conference and from previous years, visit: www.communitiesincontrol.com.au/

