

Canterbury students connected by cancer scholarships

Four students at Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha | University of Canterbury (UC) have been brought together thanks to the Chalky Carr Trust.

Kathryn McLardy, Kate Robinson, Laura Tretheway and Mario Williams have all studied different degrees, but share the support of the Chalky Carr Trust.

The Trust was formed in 2017 when former Royal Marine Commando, Navy Officer and All Blacks' Logistics Manager Kevin 'Chalky' Carr was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Although he and his family were suffering, he didn't want sympathy. Instead he rallied the people around him to help fellow cancer patients who were in less fortunate positions than him.

"Chalky felt very lucky to have the support of family and friends, but also to have the backstop of reasonable financial security – whereas so many cancer sufferers don't have this," explains Chalky's wife and Trustee, Sarah Carr. "The Chalky Carr Trust has always been about making practical differences for those bound together by cancer."

While Chalky sadly passed in 2018, his legacy lives on through the people the Trust supports, including scholarship students like Mario Williams.

"I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma when I was heading into year 13 at high school," says Mario. "I would often have chemotherapy in the morning and go to school in the afternoon – as I was determined to pass NCEA and gain University Entrance."

Mario's \$10,000 scholarship is supporting his Bachelor of Criminal Justice, which he is one year away from completing.

"The Chalky Carr Scholarship has helped me in so many ways," he explains. "It has allowed me to work less and study more."

As part of its generous donation of \$40,000 to four students over the last three years, the Chalky Carr Trust gave Kathryn McLardy the financial freedom to complete her honours degree as a mature student.

After finishing school, Kathryn was studying for a double degree when her mother was diagnosed with a terminal brain tumour. Dropping her Law degree, she focused on caring for her mother and completing her Bachelor of Arts. Kathryn didn't go back to her LLB after her mother passed – until she decided to return to university as a mature student.

An A-grade student who won class awards, Kathryn was offered a place in the Bachelor of Laws with Honours degree, but wasn't sure how she could make it work.

"There were so many sacrifices for me and my family completing the LLB later in life, and I keenly felt the loss of my mum's encouragement and her active support in my life. When I saw the Chalky Carr Scholarship, there was a sense that it recognised and validated experiences like mine and honoured the connection I felt between my mum and my efforts to complete the degree she never saw me finish."

Due to the Trust's financial support, Kathryn made it to the finish line with her LLB(Hons). The money allowed her husband to take a day a week off work so he could take care of their two young sons. With her honours thesis now submitted, Kathryn has finally completed her double degree – with honours! – and knows her mother would be proud.

"This scholarship validated my decision to spend more time with my mum before she died, and reminded me of the importance Mum had placed on my education and her belief in me. I benefited from the family of Chalky Carr and the Trustees showing an interest in my journey, their faith in me and their financial support of my dreams. Finishing



Kathryn McLardy, Kate Robinson, Laura Tretheway and Mario Williams (above) Chalky Carr when he was working with the All Blacks (right)



my LLB(Hons) was particularly special, because it's something my mum didn't see me finish – and I know she would be so proud of me completing it now.”

Kathryn isn't the only returning student with a link to the Trust: both Kate Robinson and Laura Tretheway have come back to UC to study master's degrees thanks to its support.

“I was really on the fence about doing my Master of Strategic Communication,” Laura explains. “The prospect of leaving the workforce for a year, without access to a student allowance, was really scary. I still remember when I got the call about the scholarship – I started crying in the carpark at work, because I finally knew I could make it work!”

Laura, whose father died of pancreatic cancer in 2018, is the first of her family to attend university, something she knows her dad would be proud of.

“I know my dad would have been so chuffed to see his daughter gain a master's degree – I can almost see his face now, thinking about all that bookwork! With so many scholarships based on grades alone, I cannot tell you how much it means to have been supported by one that acknowledges life experiences like cancer.”

Thinking about the students her husband's legacy has supported, Sarah Carr says, “The candidates are all chosen on a number of factors, but prevailing is their ‘can do’ attitude and their ability to help both themselves and others. I think Chalky would be delighted to meet them all and have a good old yarn, before encouraging everyone to keep going in the direction they are going!”

To learn more about the Chalky Carr Trust's work in raising funds to offer practical support to people impacted by cancer, visit chalkycarrtrust.com