

Teen's zest for life

Aarti J Narsee | 13 April, 2015



Photograph by: JACKIE CLAUSEN

"I just have to stay positive."

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For Matthew Legemaate, 17, this is a daily mantra that keeps the hope alive that he will one day receive the double lung and heart transplant he has been waiting years for.

"I want to be able to look forward to my dreams, fulfil them and make something of my life," said the Durban teenager.

He spreads positivity and the message that organ donation can save lives through a Facebook page called "Matthew's journey - come along for the drive".

His mom, Janet, 48, started the page in December last year. It documents his medical struggles and how one of his greatest wishes is coming true.

Car enthusiast Matthew has always wanted to ride in different sports cars and classic cars. A Facebook request from his mom saw people offering to give him a ride in numerous sports and vintage cars, such as the McLaren MP4-12C supercar.

He was born with a congenital heart defect and underwent surgery just 36 hours after he was born. Over the past 17 years he has undergone four open heart surgeries.

On her son's Facebook page, Janet wrote: "Despite being not well his whole life, he has a zest for life very few of us have. I know he is permanently tired, often has severe chest pains and battles to breathe at times; battles to remember or learn as his body fights for the oxygen he gets, but he still carries on."

In another post she wrote: "If God chose to take him at any time, we would know that, despite our heartache, he had enjoyed his life."

Although he is permanently on oxygen, Matthew is a Grade 10 pupil at Hillcrest High School and dreams of studying design.