

Daughter's love helps hundreds

18 Aug, 2019 12:00 AM



A selfless mum, a doting daughter and a caring community create a touching charity.

A daughter's enduring love for the mum she lost 10 years ago is helping make life just that bit easier for hundreds of families facing tough times.

For the last three years Bex Sarginson has almost single-handedly organised Food for Love, a charity operating in Wanaka in central Otago which provides dozens of meals every week for people going through sickness or hardship.

Sarginson, a solo mum who has two daughters of her own aged 14 and 10, says she learnt to give back to people through the example set by her mother who passed away a decade ago.

"I had a lovely mum who was always helping others," she says. "She would involve me too while I was still at school and through her I learnt about doing good deeds, about giving back to people."

When her mother became ill, the local community got in behind the family, raising funds to help out in her time of need and, ever since, Sarginson has been motivated to pass on this community spirit: "I was very, very close to my mum and I love helping people."

In the three years Sarginson has been involved with Food for Love, the charity has prepared well over 1500 meals for the people of the Upper Clutha area – efforts which this week saw her receive an ASB Good as Gold award, the bank giving her \$10,000 to take a well-earned break.

"We were inspired by the work Bex does to make life a little bit easier for those going through a tough time - and without even being asked," says ASB South Island regional manager Martin Gay.

Watch here:





ASB Daughter's love helps hundreds

"She obviously has her mother's kind and generous spirit and, considering she does this for others every day, we wanted to be able to surprise her with something special."

Sarginson, who lives at Lake Hawea near Wanaka, was nominated for the award by Nicki Scurr. Recently diagnosed with breast cancer, Scurr said she was humbled when contacted "out of the blue by this young woman (Sarginson) and told a meal would be delivered to me for my family.

"What a meal it was," she says. "It has now continued each week through my treatment. It is unbelievable what she does and quite behind-the-scenes; she has set up an amazing, selfless group of truly tireless helpers."

Sarginson first got involved with Food for Love in early 2016 to help out a friend who had established the charity. But soon after her friend had to pull out because of health issues and, ever since, Sarginson has coordinated the preparation and delivery of meals on her own.

Currently Sarginson has a team of more than 100 volunteers who cook meals and bake cakes and biscuits from their own homes.

"They are all everyday people who all cook because they want to," she says. "They pay for the food themselves - it is funded out of their own pockets - and they are all very kind-hearted people doing it for love."

Sarginson organises the cooks on a roster so each person provides a meal roughly once a month. Because they all have their own families to look after and pay for the food themselves, this means they are not put under too much financial or time pressure.

Currently Food for Love is providing meals for around 30 families and Sarginson says there is always a great need for its services.

"There are lots of families going through financial hardship or facing illnesses like cancer.

We help out for any kind of hardship – it could be a family going through a divorce, coping with sick kids, suffering from depression or it may be elderly people living alone.

"What we do comes down to people looking out for people," she says.

"Often those with cancer will tell us they're ok, but really they're not. Once we've provided meals we get people telling us how much it means to them."

Sarginson assigns a cook/baker to a family once it has been nominated by someone who knows they are going through a hard time. The number of meals provided to individual families each week depends on the severity of the situation they are facing.

"We will provide them meals as long as they need them and the cooks will work out the dietary needs with each family," she says.

Sarginson says while the ASB award was a surprise, she and her daughters are chuffed:

"The girls are busting to go away. My 10-year-old has never been on a plane so we're looking to go somewhere warm, that's as far as we've got

at this stage."