



Drive4Life

Your wheels will get them theirs



Wheels in motion: Chris Bates (left) and his four-wheel-driving mates raised \$74,000 for Northcott. The funds will help young people like Ben Keytes (at front with his mother, Debra Dennis).
Picture: Natasha Paes

Up on a high for \$74,000 for life

By Clare Bruce

IT'S incredible what people can achieve with just a bit of passion and enthusiasm.

Chris Bates, a Cherybrook resident and die-hard four-wheel-driver, used these magic ingredients to gather 64 strangers from across the nation, take them on a trip through Victoria's high country, and raise thousands of dollars for charity in the process.

Mr Bates held this inaugural "Drive 4 Life" charity event in April.

It raised \$74,000 for Northcott, a charity in Parramatta that supports people with disabilities.

The idea for the event was sparked, quite literally, while Mr Bates and his friends sat around a campfire two years ago during a four-wheel driving trip.

"We wanted to show people that four-wheel-drivers aren't necessarily the irresponsible idiots they're often assumed to be," he said. "We thought we'd be able to do that by raising a significant amount of money for an organisation that's not as high profile as some of the others."

Mr Bates said he had been driving in the Victorian high country since the mid 1980s. He says it's the most beautiful mountain country in Australia but that its relative inaccessibility means that only a very few NSW or Queensland people drive there.

"We offered people the chance to be taken by expert guides for a week through that area," he said.

The event attracted 64 offroad-drivers. Each paid \$1000 for the privilege of joining in. One of them chipped in an extra \$10,000.

Sponsors covered the costs of the trip and every cent went to Northcott.

Mr Bates was inspired to run the event, by his young friend Ben Keytes - a 17-year-old boy with disabilities who has received a lot of help from Northcott.

"Ben has had a pretty difficult life," Mr Bates said.

"The fact that we can make a difference to him and others like him gives you a good buzz."

Plans for next year's "Drive 4 Life" are already under way. For details call, Mr Bates on 9894 9724, 0417 229 973 or email drive4life@overlander.com.au.