



Journalist Adrian Sudbury used the last year of his life to inspire a lifesaving campaign to recruit the next generation of blood, organ and stem cell donors. **Mary Murtagh** reports

Adrian's legacy

It was just four days before he died of leukaemia that Adrian Sudbury sat up in bed and took a call from the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Ever the reporter, he had a notebook balanced on his knee and immediately started getting quotes for the next day's edition of the Huddersfield Examiner, where he worked as a digital journalist. And the scoop on this occasion?

The Prime Minister was ringing to give his support to Adrian's groundbreaking work to educate every 17 and 18-year-old in the UK about blood, stem cell and organ donation.

Fast forward five years to 2013 and what Adrian started in the final year of his life – with his 'Baldy's Blog', a visit to No 10 and shrewd journalistic campaigning – has grown into a force to be reckoned with.

The Register and Be A Lifesaver (R&Be) education project, which is run by blood cancer charity Anthony Nolan, has reached 64,000 teenagers thanks to scores of volunteers giving 1,100 talks at schools and colleges.

The result is that 5,400 young people

have signed up as blood donors, 1,500 as organ donors and 1,000 have joined the Anthony Nolan bone marrow register.

In the years to come, patients around the world will cheat certain death because a donor was inspired to join a lifesaving register thanks to Adrian.

Adrian's mum Kay said: "Adrian would be staggered and astonished by what's been achieved so far. Of course, we would all rather have Adrian back but what he inspired is phenomenal."

A touching yet compelling presentation, with a video of 27-year-old Adrian speaking directly to his audience, reduces an auditorium of chatty teenagers to pin-drop silence week in, week out.

Many of the volunteers have heartbreaking or uplifting personal stories of their own to share about why they are giving their time to R&Be.

Kay added: "Initially I thought that schools might book us for just one talk out of sympathy, but that simply hasn't been the case. They want us back year after year because they think it's important that their students hear this."

Adrian thought that if the next generation of potential

blood, stem cell and organ donors were given the facts that many would be inspired to sign up to lifesaving registers.

It was that belief that drove him to use his journalistic know-how to turn his idea into a media campaign.

Adrian was initially a reluctant blogger but his candid and personal 'Baldy's Blog' soon earned him a loyal following which inspired media interviews, a visit to No 10 and the ear of government ministers.

Kay concluded: "He used his situation in a way that he knew, as a journalist, would get attention.

"Adrian thought it was a no-brainer – that if you talked to 17 and 18-year-olds about blood, organ and stem cell donation they'd want to do something about it.

"He was adamant that no-one should feel pressured to join a register – he just wanted young people to have the facts and then make up their own mind. He was incredibly positive about the idea because it was so simple."

“
Adrian
would be
staggered
and
astonished
by what's
been
achieved
so far

”



R&Be operates in London, the Midlands, Merseyside, Yorkshire and Bristol and is looking for new volunteers. If you want to train, you'll need to be confident, enthusiastic and available weekdays between 8am and 4pm. If you'd like to train, or if you have a 16 to 18-year-old audience and would like them to hear an R&Be talk, [contact katie.campling@anthonymolan.org](mailto:contact.katie.campling@anthonymolan.org)