



# Something about Mary

A friendship forged in grief has resulted in a project that brings hope to critically ill children

LINDY GAY // 47, AND

MARY STEELE // 47, FOUNDERS, PRESTON JAMES FUND

MARY SAYS:

When I lost my son Preston in 2003, Lindy was my rock. Preston was two-and-a-half when he died – he had been suffering pneumonia from a virus, which caused an acute lung injury. A secondary bacterium invaded his body and went septic. He was put on life support but died a few hours later.

When Preston was in the ICU and he was so critically ill, I remember someone saying that life support can cause incredible lung damage to children. That stuck with me and through the Preston James Fund we're raising money for research into the impact of life support on children.

So far, we've raised \$280,000 for the Mater Children's Hospital and the research it's conducted has helped lower the mortality rate.

Everyone was shattered by Preston's death, but Lindy let me cry and scream, whereas other parents couldn't handle that grief.

I can be so honest with Lindy. We are very different, but we have a similar outlook on life. She can be quite formidable but I can cut through that. We know each other to the core.

I love her – we're going to grow old together.

LINDY SAYS:

Mary and I met at the childcare centre our children were attending. I remember seeing this blonde American in these white shorts and thinking, "Wow, look at those legs!" When our daughters, Remington and Noelle, now 11, became friends we began spending more time together.

Mary was a fitness girl and I was certainly not. She convinced me to do the Bridge to Brisbane with her in 2003. When we got back to New Farm Park, Mary had a phone call from the babysitter telling her that Preston was ill. He died a week later, on August 10.

After his death, we started the Preston James Fund. We are really inspired for personal reasons, but the committee [members] that work alongside us are amazing and so passionate. Like us, they have other jobs – I have a property business and Mary is in corporate relations – but they're devoted to the fund's work.

Mary's daughters, Noelle and Mia, 6, are a testament to her. Although I don't like to think the tragedy of Preston's death defines us, it really did help us to understand each other deeply. She levels me out – brings me back to reality. I've never loved anyone like I love Mary.

**THE PRESTON JAMES FUND SECRET GARDEN BALL**, Sat, Oct 23, 6.30pm, Ballroom, Brisbane Sofitel, city, \$180pp; \$1600 table of 10, ph: 0403 663 354. [www.prestonjames.com](http://www.prestonjames.com)



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