

SAGE effort to support a friend in need

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BOND: SAGE founder Andrew Downs with his best friend Brian Skinner who has been battling Multiple Myeloma since 2017 and, inset. an older photo of the pair as friends and apprentices at Bridgestone Tyres, 38 years ago.

SA businessman and SAGE Automation founder Andrew Downs will run for life this Sunday, not his own, but that of his friend of 38 years, Brian Skinner.

Mr Downs, who founded SAGE in 1994 and now employs more than 400 staff across the country and overseas, is participating in this Sunday's City-Bay Fun Run to raise funds for a new treatment for Multiple Myeloma for his "closest and longest standing friend".

Both first met in January 1980, beginning apprenticeships on the same day at the Bridgestone plant.

Mr Skinner was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma, an incurable cancer of the plasma cells in the bone marrow, in March 2017.

He also has Amyloidosis, the build-up of certain protein in the heart, kidneys, liver or other organs "which precludes Brian from clinical trials of ground breaking new drugs", Mr Downs said.

Most of the local staff and their families will join Mr Downs, who will undertake the 12km run, and Mr Skinner, who will walk 6km.

At the time of publishing, the SAGE/UniSA team – Unite The Fight, Beat Myeloma – was the highest fundraiser with about \$40,000 donated towards the cause.

The target is \$200,000 with the event the first of the fundraising activities., which will support UniSA's Molecular Signalling Laboratory in the Centre for Cancer Biology.

The lab, led by Professor Stuart Pitson, is leading research on a new treatment option, which could help inhibit enzymes involved in lipid metabolism in cancer.

"This research is showing great promise for complementing existing treatments, and, most critically, could make Brian responsive to Velcade (a chemotherapy drug that he is now resistant to)."