

Here's cheers to the true spirit of friendship

REBECCA DIGIROLAMO



Best mates Brian Skinner and Andrew Downs and, inset, the pair as teenage apprentices in the 1980s. Main picture: Roy VanDerVegt

A MATESHIP spanning 40 years has inspired the hand crafting of a unique Adelaide gin that is hoped to save the lives of cancer patients in years to come.

Brian Skinner – aka BBQ Bob – and SA businessman and SAGE Automation founder Andrew Downs are on a quest to raise vital research funds for an incurable blood cancer through a favourite pastime – drinking gin.

They met as teenage apprentices for Bridgestone in the 1980s.

In March 2017, Mr Skinner received the devastating diagnosis of multiple myeloma.

It's a cancer of the plasma cells in bone marrow that claims the lives of 1098 Australians each year and has a one-in-two survival rate of five years.

“There is no cure, it will come back,” Mr Skinner, 58, said.

Before COVID-19 shut down borders, the friends travelled overseas twice as part of a bucket list of things to do while they can.

They have also raised \$100,000 of the \$200,000 needed for game-changing, SA-based cancer research into multiple myeloma by Flinders University and UniSA.

They’re now on their way to raising \$50,000 through Mr Skinner’s favourite beverage of choice – gin.

Adelaide craft distillery Prohibition Liquor Co has developed a gin of six botanicals to Mr Skinner’s taste. It’s called “BBQ Bob’s Gin” and more than 40 per cent of the sale of every bottle – 400 so far – will go to the Flinders Foundation for research.

Prohibition Liquor Co was co-founded in 2015 by Wes Heddles and Adam Carpenter after Mr Heddles’ stepmother, Mary, died from a rare cancer earlier that year.

Her favourite drink was gin.

Mr Carpenter said the mates’ deep friendship and their mission to help others suffering cancer struck a chord with them.

“The fact that BBQ Bob loves his gin and the fact that we could bring him joy and raise money to help others like him meant getting involved was an easy decision,” Mr Carpenter said.

It is hoped 1000 bottles of BBQ Bob’s Gin will raise \$50,000 towards research.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [PROHIBITIONLIQUOR.CO](https://prohibitionliquor.co)