

"It's William's work, I'm just carrying on"

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WILLIAM ALDRIDGE FOUNDATION FEATURE ARTICLE

By: Paul Ferguson

http://williamaldridgefoundation.org.uk/images/fbfiles/images/Hereford_Times-20110127.png

There are a few clues in the living room. A laptop, a couple of wristbands and some drawings of her son. But to Lucy Aldridge it's proof that charity begins at home - albeit one born from heartbreak and a new-found purpose in life.

"I feel the William Aldridge Foundation is almost a gift that William has given me," said the Bredenbury mother.

"It's like he passed me the baton. he's not here to continue doing his work helping other people so I'm continuing it for him."

The William Aldridge Foundation (WAF) may not have the clout of Help for Heroes, but it's certainly made a difference.

It has raised around £30,000 for a group of Military Charities since Rifleman William Aldridge died in 2009. They include the RCDM Patient Welfare Fund, The British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association and Hounds for Heroes. The Foundation's website also acts as a central hub for servicemen and women, their families and related causes.

Running the organisation has become a full-time job for Miss Aldridge since it was officially launched in North Wales last autumn.

National recognition came in December when she was nominated in the Civilian Support section at The Sun Military Awards.

Miss Aldridge was full of pride after making the final three, but insists the Foundation is more than a one-woman operation. She said the ceremony was an emotional affair and brought back memories of her son and his colleagues.

"I would have been more comfortable if it was a nomination for the WAF because I don't like being the front person," she said. "It was a really humbling experience and a very emotional one for me because last year William's unit won the Best Unit Award that was dedicated to the 14 men that didn't come home and William's name was on the Role of Honour."

Few in Herefordshire need reminding that her son remains the Army's youngest fatality in Afghanistan. The 18 year old was deployed to Helmand three days after his birthday and died following a double explosion in Sangin.

The organisation began when William's girlfriend, Zeta Price, announced a bid to climb Kilimanjaro in his memory.

The Foundation was launched as a short-term fundraiser but the money kept coming in leading to it's official launch.

Miss Aldridge's "office" is a computer in the lounge, where two sketches of her son sit on the mantelpiece awaiting framing. She insists the grieving has never ended but takes comfort in her charity work and the expansion of the WAF.

"I would prefer not to be the front person of the WAF but I am because it's what I've chosen to do," said Miss Aldridge. "It's a position I'm not comfortable with but I'm extremely focused and determined to make this work."

http://williamaldridgefoundation.org.uk/images/fbfiles/images/HT_2.jpg

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