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ACTION FIGURES

INFOCUS



Short with twins Jack and Austin.



Baby steps

► The Gidget Foundation shines a light for new mums

WHY WE ADMIRE HER

In 2001, nine months after giving birth to her first child, Gidget Short was diagnosed with post-natal depression (PND). Three days later, she took her own life. "There was no history of mental illness in our family and we had no idea of what she was going through," says her sister, Simone Short. "We don't know how long she was unwell for; it came as a great shock. In hindsight, I think about her being very tired during her pregnancy, and thinking that was normal." Following Gidget's death, Short, her other sister and close friends discussed ways to prevent it happening to someone else. "There weren't any organisations in NSW at the time for women with PND; we decided there were two areas that needed our attention – awareness and fundraising," says Short.

WHAT SHE'S ACCOMPLISHED

The Gidget Foundation was launched in 2002 – and it's completely self-funded. "Every year we host a fundraising event," says Short. To date, over \$400,000 has been raised. Initially, the foundation would support other charities or projects, such as St John of God Health Care's counselling phone line and Tresillian Family Care Centres, which offers residential units for mums and babies. "Last year we registered to be a charity in our own right; we're now raising money for our own initiative, Gidget Midwives." In its pilot stage, the program enlists midwives to screen pregnant women for perinatal depression, so it's caught before the baby arrives. "The earlier it's diagnosed, the better the outcome," says Short. The foundation even has celebrity help: actor and mother of two Lisa Hensley (a school friend of Gidget's and star of Aussie TV hits *Brides of Christ* and *All Saints*) helps spread the word.

THE FUTURE

On September 25 the biannual Gidget Ladies' Lunch will be hosted by comedienne Julia Morris, with guest speakers Hensley and author Dr Penny Adams. Short would like to see the Midwives program roll out to all hospitals. The team will also be improving their site, gidgetfoundation.com.au. "We want mothers to be aware of it as a source of information and contact for professional help. Our website is a safe place to share how they feel and seek help."

SIMONE SHORT, 35
 Mosman, NSW

Why she's an action figure As a founder of the Gidget Foundation, Short raises awareness of perinatal (pre- and post-birth) anxiety and depression
Her day job Mother of four and the foundation's president

Short aims to raise awareness of PND

ACT NOW!

GIVE A LITTLE

You can make a donation – or volunteer your services – at gidgetfoundation.com.au. You know the drill: donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Better still, reserve your place at the 2010 biannual ball.

BE A GUINEA PIG

Check out the Black Dog Institute's website at blackdoginstitute.org.au – there are a whole bunch of ways you can get involved, from fundraising to volunteering to taking part in research studies.

HIDE HIS RAZOR

Be a Mo Sista and sign your bloke up for Movember. He grows a moustache throughout November, together you rally the donors, and the cash goes to beyondblue.org.au. See au.movember.com for more details.

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