

abel



the mirabel
foundation

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Joan

Mirabel’s very first kinship carer

In 1998, Joan found herself in a desperate situation. Her foster daughter, Urzlem, who she had raised since she was two, had just died from a heroin overdose. Sadly Urzlem had been booked to return to drug rehab the very next day. Joan was left to raise Urzlem’s two-year-old son, Haylen.

‘I was 64 years old,’ Joan recalled. ‘I think I had 25 dollars a week. I wasn’t a blood relative and I wasn’t officially a foster carer,’ she said. Jane stepped in and advocated and I eventually got more support.’

Jane’s efforts to help Joan turned into the creation of the Mirabel Foundation.

Joan is very clear that she has no idea how she and Haylen would have made it through without Mirabel. ‘I don’t know what I would have done without Mirabel. I couldn’t have managed,’ she says. ‘Mirabel was always there for us and there was no judgement. Mirabel didn’t have any particular boxes, they just accepted you.

Here is a problem – what can we do to support these people?’

‘They helped in numerous ways over the years, especially with our housing. And the Somers family camps, too. You realise you’re not alone and all these other parents are struggling with the same problems. It’s great for the kids, to meet other kids like them.’

Haylen is 27 now, and just finished university. ‘Staying alive to get him through kindergarten, then primary school, then secondary and uni has now turned into staying alive until he’s a doctor,’ she laughs. ‘I’m 89 now but hope to be around to help him get there.’

Joan