

K-State family means a lot to former Wildcat mom

By Kelly McHugh
January 6, 2013

PHOENIX — Sharon Bates is usually the one doing the traveling.

But the past week, while the Wildcats were in her hometown of Phoenix, for the Fiesta Bowl, it was like the K-State family came to her.

“It’s exciting,” said Bates, who was dressed in purple just like the 23,000 Wildcat fans who filled Chase Field on Wednesday for the Wildcats’ pep rally. “This whole event is really exciting.”

The mother of former K-State defensive lineman Anthony Bates stood among the crowd — though it’s been more than a decade since her son died from an undiagnosed heart condition — she’s is still a proud K-State mom.

With the support of K-State head coach Bill Snyder, Bates was able to continue the legacy of her son through the Anthony Bates Foundation, an organization dedicated to saving the lives of young people by offering heart screenings used to detect heart problems before they result in tragedy.

Anthony, 20-years-old, didn’t know he had a heart problem and neither did his mother. But on July 31, 2000, as he drove home after a practice, he experienced the worst of the undiagnosed heart condition, Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM), which ultimately led to his death.

Since the first screening event the Anthony Bates Foundation founded in 2001, Bates has traveled the country offering people the opportunity to have their own and their children’s hearts screened. The foundation has seen more than 4,000 males and 3,000 females, and Bates has come to find that more 10 percent of people screened have an abnormal result.

“The most important thing is to remember that Anthony did not have symptoms that he knew about.” Bates said. “We lose 7,000 kids a year to sudden cardiac arrest, but only 300 of those are NCAA college athletes. So, until the NCAA thinks that this is really important, we just go about it on our own.”

While Bates started the foundation, she didn’t go about it alone. She said Snyder encouraged her to do it, and continues to support it today and also requires every member of his football team to have annual heart screenings when the Anthony Bates Foundation comes to Manhattan.

“He’s my friend,” Bates said about Snyder, “and when it comes down to it, he’s the one that encourages you and continues to guide you, especially me. He tries to help do what he can.

“He’s talked to other coaching staffs in honor of the Anthony Bates Foundation to try and encourage other schools to do screenings, and I think that’s a great thing for college kids and college athletes.”

This year the Anthony Bates Foundation will return to Manhattan in September — Bates said they are yet to chose an exact date — and offer heart screenings to anyone who wishes to take part. While the screenings are free, donations are accepted.

“Receiving funds and donations really helps us with what we’re doing,” Bates said, “people can donate online or come out and volunteer their help when we come to town once a year to do screenings.”

A heart screening at a doctor’s office can cost upwards of \$6,000, Bates said.

“Six-thousand dollars compared to free, or a \$20 donation, when we come to Kansas?” Bates said. “I mean, that’s really the reality of it. We can do the screenings for very, very little when we have mass amounts as long as we have support, and Kansas State has been supporting the Anthony Bates Foundation from the beginning.”