

# Wally to cycle for heart health



Wally and his daughter Yvette are cycling in aid of heart health awareness

Picture: Kanina Foss

## KANINA FOSS

A few days ago, Wally Katzke was at hospital to pick up his medicine when a little girl came running up to him. "Are you Wally?" she asked, before throwing her arms around him in a huge hug.

As Wally stood there awkwardly, being "hugged to death", the other people in the hospital passage would probably have recognised him too.

Since taking part in South Africa's first live telecast of open-heart surgery, Wally has become a household face, and his story has inspired many to make the necessary lifestyle changes to avoid cardiovascular disease.

For Wally, his surgery has set him on a new personal path – one that involves many challenges. He will take on one of these challenges on Sunday, when he wheels his bicycle to the starting line of the Cape Argus Pick n Pay Cycle Tour in Cape Town in the colours of his new sponsor, leading heart vitality brand Flora.

His daughter, Yvette Nell, will be by his side. When he first told her he was planning to do the race, Yvette said: "I'm in."

The last time this father and daughter took on the Argus together was in Yvette's matric year. "The last time I did it, it was so much fun. The vibe, the music, the people. Look, when you get off the bike you know you've done 109km. But it's so beautiful," said Yvette.

First comes training. The hardest thing for Wally was getting into a routine and sticking to it, especially when

that meant waking up in time for a 5am cycle every morning.

For Yvette, who has two young children, it was particularly difficult to maintain the routine of family life while training. "At night, by the time you're finished with the kids and cooking and homework, you're very tired," she said.

Her persistence has paid off in weight loss, and for her father, weight gain. Both are very happy with the physical and emotional improvements they've experienced since taking on the challenge. "You feel better, you feel alive," said Yvette.

Wally had previously been a keen cyclist, but he'd gradually

become less active. When he realised he'd put his life at risk by letting his lifestyle habits slip, he decided to make some changes. About six weeks after his operation, he was back on his bike.

Not only has his diagnosis reunited him with a former passion, cycling, it has also resulted in a complete revamp of his lifestyle habits.

He's stopped smoking, and he's eating healthily. "It's become automatic, a way of life. I don't have to think about it," he said.

During the race, Wally will make use of a heart monitor – "I can't do without it" – to ensure that his heart rate doesn't exceed

the maximum that is safe for his body.

The heart monitor will determine how fast he is able to go, but his goal finishing time is five-and-a-half hours.

At the end of it all, when he climbs off his bike, he will be stepping into his hiking boots to begin training for another great challenge – Mount Kilimanjaro. In July, Wally and Yvette will attempt to summit the highest free-standing mountain in the world.

For Wally, the climb will hold a special significance. "By conquering the mountain I'll know I've conquered heart disease."



Wally Katzke's heart surgery was broadcast live on SABC 3

Picture courtesy: SABC



## WATCH WALLY CONQUER ANOTHER PEAK ON HIS ROAD TO HEART HEALTH.

Wally, good luck for the Cape Argus Pick n Pay Cycle Tour from all of us at Flora. We'll be cheering you on every step of the way. Thanks for showing the nation that no matter how steep the road to heart health may get, it's worth taking.



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