



## Hot rod full of life

By DENISE PIPER - Whangarei Leader    Last updated 05:00 15/09/2009

**LIFELINE:** Jamie Rosemergy hopes the Choose Life hot rod project – that will “pimp” this 1972 Ford XY Fairmont with GT Shaker – will save at least one life.

A suicide awareness project is getting people talking before its wheels have even hit the road.

Whangarei man Jamie Rosemergy began the Choose Life hot rod build after the death of his younger brother Rhys in March this year.

Jamie says the death of his brother was a real shock and he was frightened to learn how many people have been affected by the suicide of a family member or friend.

"I've had groups of people coming up to see me who have not just had one suicide in their acquaintances or family, it's three or four or five – the numbers are very scary," he says.

In New Zealand more than 500 people commit suicide each year. The rates in Northland, particularly for men, are higher than the national average.

Jamie found there is a huge stigma around suicide, with those affected by a death often unwilling to talk about it.

"Some people feel embarrassed, some are just emotionally upset," he says.

Jamie was spurred to start a project encouraging people to choose life.

He decided to build a hot rod because Rhys loved cars and it targeted young men, who are particularly vulnerable to suicide.

The theme will be Pimping Rides to Save Lives, he says.

Jamie has bought a 1972 Ford XY Fairmont GT with Shaker bonnet scoop.

The aim is to do up the hot rod with a new interior, an engine that will look like a "jewellery box" and a customised paint job with a Choose Life theme, including Lifeline's 0800 number.

Once complete, the car can travel to schools, events and hot rod shows to raise awareness about suicide, teach people warning signs to look for and show people where to go for help.

Jamie says he would like to have the car finished by March next year – Rhys' anniversary.

But the project is already getting people to talk about suicide, he says.

The Choose Life project already has a groundswell of support, with 27 supporters including Krystal Klear Car Painters where Rhys worked, Lifeline, Whangarei Lions and Whangarei RSA.

"It's not just about me and it's not just about my brother.

"It's about suicide in general and the alarming rates of suicide and the numbers of people affected," says Jamie.

"I would not have done this without the numerous groups of people coming to see me – that's what broke my heart. Some people have lost two brothers."

A charity auction is planned by the end of October plus other events including a cake stall.

Jamie says all donations will go through a charitable trust and those who want to give money can donate to the Choose Life Hot Rod account at any National bBank.

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