



Runaway Bay sisters Sam and Jamie-Lee Dwyer, both sufferers of Friedreich's Ataxia disease, have received \$20,000 from Humphrey Firkins as part of their fundraising to find a cure
Photo: DAVID CLARK

A world of generosity for sisters' cause

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SEPARATED by half the globe, a Singaporean and a Gold Coaster have a shared bond through donating \$45,000 towards finding a cure for the disease which has struck two Runaway Bay sisters.

After a Bulletin story in October on the plight of Jamie-Lee, 19, and Sam Dwyer, 18, went viral, being sent around the globe via email, Singaporean businessman Neil Palmer dug out his cheque book.

Mr Palmer was a friend of the family and, after reading the emailed

article, donated \$25,000 to the research program.

His money was just part of the \$72,000 raised by the Saint Stephen's College community on Sunday when it held a mock Olympics, organised by a parent at the school, Bryan Vadas.

The money raised has been given to the Friedreich's Ataxia Research Association.

Friedreich's ataxia is a genetic, degenerative disease that attacks the muscular and nervous system, affecting one in 50,000 people.

Hope Island man and long-time benefactor of the school, Humphrey Firkins, donated \$20,000. Mr Firkins

said he felt a connection with the girls through his own battle with a neurological disease, myositis.

"There's a very close parallel ... it's similar but we're at different ends of the (age) scale," he said.

The girls' father, Mike Dwyer, said he had spoken to both donors.

"It's hard to know what to say to someone who has been so generous," he said.

Mr Dwyer said the girls had been diagnosed eight years ago.

Sam said she was blown away by the response from her old school while Jamie-Lee said she was thrilled to see the school get behind the event.