

STRONG HART OVERCOMES ALL

IN TOP TRUCK, WESTERN STAR, AUGUST 2021 • 12 MINUTES • BY NZ TRUCKING MAGAZINE • SEPTEMBER 7, 2021



With both mum and dad heavily entrenched in transport, it was no surprise a young Josh Hart would become involved as he grew up. But no one could have anticipated how this young man's life story would impact so many and be the beacon they needed to find hope on some of life's darkest highways.

Arriving at the Mercer Service Centre on a grey winter's morning, we could not miss the glowing paint on the latest addition to the Hart Haulage fleet – a second, bright-pink Western Star. Just as bright and glowing was the smile on Josh Hart's face and his welcoming handshake. Here is a young man who is truly

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pleased to make your acquaintance, and share a good laugh.

Sitting down with Josh and his mum and dad – Debbie and Barry Hart – over a coffee with the Western Star parked directly outside the window, it is hard to miss the messages ‘spread kindness, bullying stops here’ emblazoned across the sides of the alloy bins. Bold, strong, sincere, and straight to the point. This truck and the message it so proudly carries is the result of Josh Hart’s personal life experiences. He was seriously bullied throughout his school- age years and came close to destruction. But with the love and assistance of family and friends, he has triumphed over those hurdles.

Listening to Josh, you quickly realise this ray of sunshine has had more than his share of cloudy days.



“It all started very early in school, text messages in the middle of the night saying that I shouldn’t bother coming to school the next day and that I should harm myself were normal for me,” says Josh. “I have scars over my body from those days trying to do what people were saying to me, as well as trying to escape the situation I was in.”

Sitting chatting, we discussed how scars formed in those formative years can become deeply ingrained in someone’s subconscious and last a lifetime. This, in turn, impacts heavily on an individual’s self-confidence, holding them back from seeking out their own dreams and aspirations. The power of a few terse words is frightening.

Trick

Power C

Barry and Debbie could see that school was not the place for Josh and decided to involve him in their fledgling bulk-haulage company. The cab of Barry’s truck quickly became Josh’s happy space.

At about 16 years of age, Josh started off-highway, driving a 6×4 R-model Mack tipper. After his 18th birthday, he started the process of acquiring his class 4 and 5 licenses.



MACK CH EARLY
EA7 400



2006 FUSO
CANTER
DOUBLE CAB



1997 ERF EC 14
AND AN EC 11

NEW JOBS WITH NZ TRANSPORT JOBS

Truck driver - Class 5 logging:
Trade Me 3246637328

Truck Driver - Class 5 line haul:
Trade Me 3245292706

Truck driver - Class 4: Trade Me
3226915618



"I remember watching and listening in over the R/T when Josh was learning to reverse a trailer, and the other drivers would coach him, saying things like 'don't worry mate, take your time, we all started somewhere'," says Barry. "It was amazing to see Josh enjoy the opposite of what he had been so used to. Instead of the negativity of his school years, here he was being coached, praised, and accepted by those he aspired to be like. 'Finally,' I thought, 'he has found his place'."

Josh is quick to add: "It is trucks and the trucking industry that has saved my life. I laugh now when I think of some of the comments by some of my teachers back at school, saying to me that there is no money in looking out a window – and here I am now earning more than them looking out a window."

The idea to paint a truck pink was mooted by Josh to Barry and Debbie about three years ago. Josh knew of the anti-bullying pink T-shirt movement, started in 2007 at a high school in Nova Scotia by two pupils, and felt that it would be a way to convey his own message of hope to one or two people that might need a little assistance to push through their own bullying battles. It was agreed and the Western Star was sent to the paint shop to have the old green removed and a fresh coat of bright pink applied in its place. Then, with the message applied to the alloy bins, it was straight back out on the road to work. The impact of the message was immediate.



The magic at work, Josh chatting to a couple of fellow drivers keen to hear his message at the Mercer Service Centre.

“The phone started to ring straight away with people who had seen Josh in the pink Western Star with its message and were looking for guidance and assistance to places of help, but did not know where to start,” says Barry.

“Some of the stories I have heard would make your hair curl; 40-year-old blokes suffering severe workplace bullying from their own bosses. Go figure? It is shocking. It’s just great that they have seen Josh and the truck and have taken a positive step to seek help for themselves, that’s what this is all about.”

Three years on, there was a need in the Hart Haulage fleet for a new addition, so Barry and Debbie hatched a plan to help Josh take his crusade to the next level.

A phone call to the team at Penske New Zealand was the first step to let them in on the idea and get the new addition secretly built behind the scenes without Josh knowing.

“It was a mission,” says Barry. “But Penske was simply magic and truly went above and beyond what we could ever have wished for.”

Next, it was off to Transfleet Trailers, which was also immediately onboard with the scheme, and the result is perfection.

Haddock Spraypainters and Panelbeaters in Whakatane and Wrapped Auto Signs in Tauranga worked wonders to bring the entire combination together, with its incredible appearance. BroLube also jumped onboard by outfitting the entire rig with an automated greasing system.



Josh Hart, a man with a message on a mission.

Barry and Debbie cannot believe the support that they have received to help make this happen. Both agree that support of this level from commercial suppliers is 100% affirmation that the journey Josh has embarked on is greatly appreciated and essential.

The impact of the bright- pink Western Star and Transfleet Trailers combination could not have been any more obvious on the day. As we were taking a few photos, a couple of drivers stopped at the service centre, wondered over, and started to chat with Josh. Right there, we witnessed the magic. Josh used the opportunity to convey his story to these newfound friends, but most importantly, he listened to theirs.

Hearing Josh's story regarding the bullying he was subjected to is gut-wrenching, and that's putting it mildly. It leaves you shaking your head in disbelief, especially when you consider how often the perpetrators are young themselves. Given the extent and severity of the bullying he was subjected to, it is a blessing Josh is standing here with us today. He is the first to admit that things could have easily turned out very differently.

It is here that the true measure of Josh's tenacity is understood. By staying close to family and friends and learning how to openly discuss how he was feeling, and also seeking out and finding disciplines that would reinforce his mental state, a pathway forward was slowly and securely paved. There have been a few twists and turns along the way for Josh, but these speed bumps eventually strengthen our ability to adjust and adapt and increase our depth of character.

Unfortunately, we do not have to look too far to find memories of bullying and its impact on either ourselves or those we hold near and dear. On the flip side, we might also have memories that we are not proud of where we have said or done things we should not have. But we all have the power to change, as well as support those that need help to change. It is a continuous journey, and travelling it together we are definitely stronger.

QUICK SPECS	
Western Star 4864 FXC	
Engine:	Detroit Diesel DD15 15-litre
Power/Torque:	418kW (560hp), 2508Nm (1850lb/ft)
Transmission:	Eaton Roadranger RTLO20918B Manual 18-speed
Front axle:	Meritor MFS-14 143A FF1
Rear axle:	Meritor RT46-160GP with front and rear diff lock
Rear suspension:	Airliner 46,000lb
Features/Extras:	Twin stacks, stainless-steel visor, bug guards, bonnet flashes, cab under-skirts, headlight surrounds. Alloy air-cleaner barrels, intake extensions, ram intakes. Texas bumper. Polished alloy wheels. Additional lighting.
Paint/Signage:	Haddock Spraypainters and Panelbeaters – Whakatane. Wrapped Auto Signs - Tauranga
Body/Trailer:	Transfleet Trailers

BACK TO THE OTHERSIDE

The New Zealand summer of 2005 saw the release of Breaks Co-Op’s new single, The Otherside. It had a real Kiwi flavour and quickly became a summer roadie favourite. In an interview with Billboard in 2017, entertainer, rapper, and record producer Kid Rock explained how he literally stumbled across the song and thought, ‘Wow, these guys’ harmonies are as good as Crosby, Stills & Nash, or any other that I’ve heard.’ He then set about talking with the band, striking up a collaboration, where he used the basis of the original song with an overlay of his own rap lyrics that explore the tragedy of suicide and the fact that no matter how bad we might perceive a situation, there is always an alternative and positive way forward. They are strong lyrics with an even stronger message, definitely worth a listen and adding to the playlist.

