28 Miles in 28 Days

Friday 19 February, 2021

Thomas Riley – raising money for Ataxia UK

Hull, UK

Thomas is an 11-year-old boy who loves football, wrestling and gaming, like many of his friends. However, unlike his peers, Thomas has a rare medical condition called Friedreich's ataxia.

The ataxias are a group of rare, neurological conditions. They disrupt the messages sent from our brains to our muscles, which makes communicating and moving a daily challenge. They are progressive and currently there are no cures for the majority of ataxias. Friedreich's ataxia is the most common form of hereditary ataxia and symptoms usually begin in childhood, like they did for Thomas. Around 10,000 adults and 500 children have ataxia in the UK.

Thomas is known as an inspiration by many for his courage and motivation for life. In 2019 he won the Hull Daily Mail Golden Apple Award, 'Against All Odds', in recognition of his amazing positive attitude and outstanding achievements.

Recently, he has been inspired by the efforts of the wonderful Captain Sir Tom Moore, and has challenged himself to walk (and wheel!) a mile, every day in February. Though this may seem a small effort to some, Thomas struggles with his mobility, and spends an increasing amount of time in his wheelchair, so this is a huge physical and mental challenge for him. Thomas set himself a goal of raising £500 for Ataxia UK - a target which he has already exceeded 7 times over, with 2 weeks still to go!

Grandma, Margaret Riley, said: "Even a fall didn't stop this superstar getting out there again. Thomas doesn't give into anything."

Mum, Lucy Riley, said: "We're so proud of him. Despite the challenges he faces each and every day, he approaches everything with a smile. Even on the tough days, he still pushes through to achieve his goal. He's so grateful to everyone supporting him."

Since Thomas' diagnosis of Friedreich's ataxia, his family has made a tremendous effort into raising money for Ataxia UK and awareness of ataxia to support him. Dad, James Riley, has completed over twelve running events, plus a marathon around their garden; raising thousands for Ataxia UK. Friends and family have shown incredible support in many ways, taking on their own fundraisers, cheering at events and helping the Rileys.

Ataxia UK funds research into treatments and cures, and supports those affected by ataxia through their helpline, advice and information, branches and support groups across the country, and much more. But, now more than ever, they need help to continue supporting people affected by ataxia.

Sue Millman, CEO of Ataxia UK said: "We are delighted to see Thomas' courage and motivation in aid of raising funds to support others in the ataxia community. His support and enthusiasm, and that of all our fundraisers is vital in enabling Ataxia UK to support the thousands of people affected by ataxia."

The Riley's write a wonderful blog with updates on Thomas and their life (https://lifeofrileys.org/). They also have a Facebook (@thelifeofrileys) and Instagram account (the_life_of_rileys) where you can follow Thomas' incredible journey. If you would like to support Thomas, you can find his fundraising page at: www.JustGiving.com/fundraising/28milesin28days

Ataxia UK funds research to find treatments and cures. They offer support to families affected, and look to improve treatment and care for patients.

For more information visit **ataxia.org.uk** or **facebook.com/ataxiauk**

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