

£48,000 boost to stroke charity in Memory of G.P. who died of a stroke aged 47

Monday 28 September, 2020

Percy's Pals, a fundraising group set up in memory of Dr Richard Percival has donated £48,000 to a charity supporting younger stroke survivors.

Different Strokes, a charity which supports working age and younger stroke survivors, has benefitted from a donation worth £48,380 from Percy's Pals, a fundraising group established in 2013 after the death of Dr Richard Percival, who died after having a stroke aged 47.

Stroke is often thought of something that only affects the elderly, but across the UK around 30,000 people per year of working age have a stroke, and Different Strokes supports them through a network of local groups, through an online support group and through peer support over the phone and by email, including a dedicated befriending service for young people aged 16-25. Its ethos is 'survivors supporting survivors' with approximately half of its staff and trustees being stroke survivors themselves.

Like many charities, Different Strokes has been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic, with a 40% reduction in income in 2020, largely due to the cancellation of fundraising events. Despite this drop in income in the last 6 months, the charity has significantly adapted its services to ensure that stroke survivors are still able to get the best available support. In order to achieve this, a number of new initiatives have been developed. These include daily online exercise sessions for stroke survivors, weekly online Tai Chi classes, weekly 'stroke survivor in lockdown' video calls, and guest speakers on a range of issues relevant to stroke survivors. All these subjects are recorded and available to be seen online via the charity's Facebook page and YouTube channel.

Percy's Pals was set up by friends of Dr Percival – Percy to his friends – in the village of Twyford, Hampshire. Their original aim was to raise £150,000 for a new bedside head scanner at Southampton Hospital's specialist Wessex Neurological Centre, where Percy was treated before he died. The target was met after 18 months and the scanner installed in 2016, but after this date funds continued to be raised. The group has since been searching for an appropriate partner like Different Strokes to help benefit stroke survivors in the local area and beyond.

Tim Smith, from Percy's Pals said:

"Helping the team at Different Strokes with this donation is an ideal opportunity for us to direct much-needed funding to an illness that often gets overshadowed by other charities such as heart disease and cancer. Richard died at a relatively young age and was a dedicated GP doctor who cared about the health and wellbeing of others. As tragic as his death was in 2013 it has inspired friends of his to raise considerable sums in his memory and to contribute towards the work Richard did in life."

This donation follows on from the scanner appeal which now benefits thousands of stroke and brain-injured survivors in the south of England. Through Different Strokes, those patients are able to access the vital support systems they will need to help aid their recovery once discharged from hospital. It is a source of great comfort to Richard's family and friends that donations such as these are able to be made in his name."

Austin Willett, CEO of Different Strokes, commented,

"We are so grateful to everyone involved with Percy's Pals for this very generous donation. This year has been very difficult for us, and although we have managed to mitigate some of the income we have lost through the government furlough scheme, a small business grant, and reducing some general costs, we still faced a significant hole in our budget. Much of that hole has now been filled with this donation, which will enable us to extend our new online support activities into 2021, will ensure that our befriending service for teens and young adult stroke survivors will continue for another 12 months and go towards the general running costs of the charity. In addition, we will be focusing on some work specifically in Hampshire, to ensure that local people are aware of younger stroke and the support that is available for younger stroke survivors. We really appreciate having the value of our work recognised by Percy's Pals, and these funds will be invaluable as we continue to support stroke survivors to reclaim their lives in these very challenging times"

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