Alan takes a leap of faith for family in sponsored skydive

Monday 31 July, 2017

A dedicated charity worker is going above and beyond to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust by tackling his fear of heights in a sponsored skydive next month to raise money for the charity.

Alan Booth, 54 from Bethnal Green, will be facing his fears next month as he leaps out of a plane to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust. Alan, who has worked for the charity for five years and currently runs its 'Home from Home' Stevenson House, in Whitechapel, London, is bravely taking on this challenge in support of a family who the charity helped when their baby was seriously ill in The Royal London Hospital.

In December 2015 Alan welcomed parents Gary and Carly Jones to Stevenson House when their son Charlie was born prematurely, weighing just 1lb 10oz. Charlie required emergency treatment at The Royal London Hospital where he underwent lifesaving surgery at just a week old. For two months, as Charlie underwent serious treatment, Gary and Carly were supported with free 'Home from Home' accommodation run by The Sick Children's Trust at Stevenson House. **House Manager Alan says**:

"Gary and Carly stayed with us for two months when Charlie was in hospital. It was hard for them to see their baby struggling so much, but they were just so pleased to be only a few minutes away from Charlie's hospital bedside. We would have long chats about Charlie, they would always let me know how he was doing. And on the day they came to tell me he was well enough to be discharged, I was delighted.

"Since they've been back at home, Gary and Carly have always stayed in touch and brought Charlie along to see me which was really lovely. And it was on one of these visits that Gary mentioned the skydive. A couple of families had approached me to do this in the past but I'm terrified of heights and it was Gary who finally convinced me to go for it. I thought, why not? It's something to tick off my bucket list! And I also love what I do and feel very proud to work for The Sick Children's Trust which gives comfort and support to families when their lives are in complete turmoil."

The skydive, which takes place on Sunday 13 August in Maidstone, Kent, will see Alan accompanied by Gary and seven others jumping out of a plane at 12,000ft. In addition to raising £1,000 for The Sick Children's Trust, which runs ten free 'Homes from Home' across the country, Alan is also doing the jump in memory of his mum Rita who sadly passed away last year. **He adds:**

"Rita was thrilled when I started working for The Sick Children's Trust, so it was really important to do this in her memory. Rita had a great sense of humour and a sharp wit and would think I was crazy for doing this. Mumfie, as we called her, had no head for heights but I know she would be very proud of me."

The Sick Children's Trust supports around 4,000 families with seriously ill children. And although the 'Homes from Home' are free of charge to families with sick children in hospital, it costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. **Dad Gary Jones says:**

"For us Stevenson House was a godsend. They took us in with no questions and we stayed there for the nine weeks it took for Charlie to get better. Not only did the charity provide us with much needed emotional support, it was so practical. We were just minutes away from our baby's bedside and I could also still continue going to work because I knew that Charlie wasn't ever alone, as he had his mummy with him at all times.

"It's unnatural for a parent to be separated from their child, especially when you're already feeling so helpless. Stevenson House really was a 'Home from Home': those sleepless nights were made a lot easier knowing we were only minutes away if something happened."

Since Charlie has been home he has gone from strength to strength and is a happy and healthy toddler. His family have been passionately fundraising for The Sick Children's Trust ever since. **Gary adds:**

"I'll never forget The Sick Children's Trust for what they did. I can't thank them enough, but I thought raising some money by falling out of a plane would be a good place to start!

"Charlie is doing really well at the moment. He still suffers from Chronic Lung disease and a mild form of cerebral palsy, but he's undergoing physio and considering all that he's been through he's a healthy,

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happy little boy.”

If you’d like to sponsor Alan, and to read more about his story, please visit: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hearmescream

For further information about The Sick Children’s Trust, please visit http://www.sickchildrenstrust.org/

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