Brave little boy organises Pyjama Party to raise money in memory of his sister

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A local school boy, who tragically lost his older sister to cancer last year, has raised money to thank The Sick Children's Trust and Bethany's Wish for their support whilst she received specialist treatment in a hospital miles away from home.

Seven year old Archie Smith, from Cadger Bank in Lanchester, has raised over £600 for The Sick Children's Trust and Bethany's Wish after organising a Pyjama Party at his school in his sister Lucia's memory.

Over 500 pupils and staff from Lanchester Endowed Parochial Primary, popped on their favourite pair of pyjamas and raised an incredible amount of money for The Sick Children's Trust after the charity supported Archie's family with free 'Home from Home' accommodation while Lucia battled cancer at Newcastle upon Tyne's Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI).

In 2016, at just eight years old, Lucia was diagnosed with kidney cancer following scans which revealed she had a Wilms' tumour. Initially, Lucia underwent chemotherapy at her local hospital, but was transferred in May that year miles away from home to Newcastle's RVI for an 11 hour surgery to remove the tumour. Lucia remained on the paediatric intensive care unit (PICU) for a week before being transferred to a general ward at the hospital. Throughout her treatment on PICU, Lucia's family were supported at Crawford House, free 'Home from Home' accommodation run The Sick Children's Trust which meant they were never more than a couple of minutes from their daughter's hospital bedside. **Gemma, Archie and Lucia's Mum, says:**

"We stayed in Crawford House for a week when Lucia was in PICU. My memory of the whole experience is a complete blur. It was one of the hardest weeks of my life. I just wanted to make sure I could be there for Lucia when she needed me which is why I found Crawford House such a valuable resource. It took away the practical stress of finding somewhere near to stay every night and let me concentrate on what mattered most – supporting my daughter."

Despite the surgery and further treatment, Lucia's condition deteriorated over the next year and her family received the devastating news that there was nothing more that could be done for her. Lucia tragically passed away in May last year, aged just nine years old. Lucia's brother wanted to thank the charities that had helped his family during his sister's painfully short life. **Gemma continues:**

"I am so incredibly proud of Archie for the way he has handled everything since we lost Lucia. He was extremely close to his big sister and I know how much he misses her. It was his idea to organise a Pyjama Party and he wrote a letter to the Headmistress of his school to ask if this would be possible. The school agreed readily and supported him fully to make the event a success."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country, supporting families with seriously ill children in hospital. Although the accommodation is provided free of charge to families, it costs The Sick Children's Trust £30 to support a family for one night. **Mum, Gemma, adds:**

"In May, Lucia's school, Northern Counties in Jesmond, are also holding a Pyjama Party in her memory. Words can't describe how touched I am that everyone has rallied round to raise money and say thank you to The Sick Children's Trust. Lucia was a happy, bubbly, sweet girl with a fantastic smile, and this is how she will always be remembered."

The Sick Children's Trust's Pyjama Party encourages children to be sponsored to wear their pyjamas for the day and take part in various creative, active and educational activities. The charity runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country, supporting around 4,000 families every year and relies on donations to keep its houses open. **Vicki Roots, Community Fundraising Officer at The Sick Children's Trust, says:**

"Lucia's family have suffered a huge loss and they are in all our thoughts. It takes an incredible little boy to organise a Pyjama Party for an entire school and we are so grateful for everything he has achieved. It will go a long way in helping to support other families with a seriously ill child in hospital.

"We also wish Lucia's school the best of luck with their Pyjama Party in May. As a charity, we rely

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entirely on voluntary donations, so all the money raised from these Pyjama Parties will enable families to stay together, just minutes from their children's hospital bedside. This generosity at such a difficult time means so much."

For more information about The Sick Children's Trust, please visit www.sickchildrenstrust.org.

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