Couple’s 365 day charity mission in memory of son

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The parents of twin boys born at just 27 weeks are halfway through a year-long fundraising mission for The Sick Children’s Trust and Leeds Care to thank them for their invaluable support.
Emily and Max Bridges, from Airedale, have been running up mountains, trudging through mud and much more every month to raise money for The Sick Children’s Trust and Leeds Care. Last November, Emily and Max’s lives changed forever when Emily, 27, suddenly went into labour at home and Max delivered his sons on the bathroom floor. Born extremely premature, one twin, Zachary, wasn’t breathing and his dad desperately performed CPR in an attempt to save his life.
Zachary and his brother, Dexter, were rushed to Airedale Hospital but needed specialist treatment due to their prematurity and were transferred to Leeds Children’s Hospital. As the couple waited for news, they were told about Eckersley House – free ‘Home from Home’ accommodation run by The Sick Children’s Trust – just a few minutes’ walk from the children’s wards. Despite the hospital’s best efforts, Zachary’s condition soon started deteriorating and his parents were told he had no chance of survival. Tragically, just three days and 17 hours after being born, he passed away peacefully in his parents’ arms.
Four weeks later, Dexter was stable enough to be transferred back to the family’s local hospital where he spent five weeks before being allowed home. Since, Emily and Max have been focusing on raising awareness and funds for both The Sick Children’s Trust and Leeds Cares. 35 year old Max said:
“When we were in Leeds, Emily and I decided that we wanted to fundraise for The Sick Children’s Trust and Leeds Care. We want to help ease the burden for any other family who find themselves in a situation like we did. We want to do everything and anything we can to help provide that care to children, because they need their parents by their side as much as a parent needs to be with their child. We know how important this money is to families with seriously ill children in hospital and the impact a ‘Home from Home’ has. The provision of Eckersley House proved invaluable to us, as it allowed us to be right where we needed to be. We are so thankful that we were given the opportunity to stay there.
“So in memory of our beautiful son Zachary, Emily and I will be undertaking a year’s worth of challenges – some of these will physical and some will be mental to represent the journey we’ve been on. All of which will be raising money for both The Sick Children’s Trust and Leeds Care.”
The charity challenge started with a body wax for Max and Emily jogging 49 miles – the distance from their home to Leeds which the boys travelled, Max has scaled some of the country’s highest peaks carrying an empty pram to signify their loss and they also attempted an escape room to represent the mental challenges they have faced. Emily said:
“Every challenge we have chosen is either physical or mental and we’ve been overwhelmed with all the support we’ve received from family and friends. We feel like we’ve been doing really well and looking forward to our next challenges which will be a Kapow Superhero Obstacle Course and the Upper Wharfdale Fell three peaks.”
Eckersley House is one of ten ‘Homes from Home’ run by The Sick Children’s Trust. It costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night, allowing them to focus all their energy on their child. Eckersley House Manager Jane McHale said:
“It means so much to us that Max and Emily are fundraising for Eckersley House and it’s so lovely to see all the support they’re receiving from their family and friends.
“By having a place to stay at Eckersley House, Max and Emily were able to spend that precious time with Zachary which may not have been possible if they’d had to make the 90 minute journey from home to hospital every day. It relieved them of so much stress and gave them one less thing to worry about. While they were supported by The Sick Children’s Trust, Dexter benefitted from family integrated care as his parents could be there every step of the way throughout his recovery which is something so important and which we believe helps speed up a child’s recovery.
“We wish Emily and Max all the best for their upcoming challenges and know that they’ll continue to succeed!”
For further information about The Sick Children’s Trust, please visit http://www.sickchildrenstrust.org/

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