Dad and friends take on skydive and fly high to raise over £10,000 for charity who supported family in need

Thursday 7 September, 2017

The dad of a little boy whose son was born weighing just 1lb 10oz harnessed the support of eight friends and raised £10,786 in a charity skydive for The Sick Children's Trust.

Gary Jones, 34, from Hornchurch in Essex, and eight friends all jumped out of a plane at 12,000 feet on 13 August to raise money for the charity that supported Gary and his family after the birth of their extremely premature baby boy, Charlie, back in December 2015.

Charlie was born 15 weeks early at Homerton University Hospital in Hackney weighing only 1lb 10oz. Because Charlie was so premature, his bowels hadn't developed properly. And at one week old he required an emergency transfer to The Royal London Hospital to undergo lifesaving surgery to fit a stoma. Whilst Charlie was being treated at the specialist hospital his parents, Gary and Carly, were supported by The Sick Children's Trust at Stevenson House, just minutes from their son's hospital bedside. **Dad Gary, who organised the skydive, says:**

"It was a rollercoaster three months and the worst time of our lives. We were told by doctors that Charlie's chances of survival were very slim. When he was born he was so tiny that we could see his organs struggling to work through his almost-transparent skin. It was so stressful and The Sick Children's Trust came to us in our time of need. They gave us a place to stay, just minutes from our son's hospital bedside. We stayed in Stevenson House for over two months when Charlie was in hospital and we will never forget the support the House Manager Alan and his team offered us.

"The first day we stayed, it felt so unnatural for us to have to leave Charlie in the hospital, but we knew we had no choice. We were so lucky though that when we did leave him we were only a few minutes away, and in our room at Stevenson House there was a direct phone line straight to the ward so that we could call every night before we went to bed and every morning as soon as we woke up. While we were at The Royal London, Charlie's stoma became infected and he had to have a second operation to remove it, Carly and I were fraught with worry. The emotional support that The Sick Children's Trust gave us during those many sleepless nights was incredible. We were being told all sorts of things by the doctors - like that Charlie might not make it or that if he did he would be severely brain damaged and unlikely to ever walk. We were traumatised. But Alan and the team were there for us, every step of the way. Offering us a shoulder to cry on, or a chat over a cup of tea. It really helped.

"Now that 18 months have passed and Charlie is doing so well, I wanted to organise a fundraiser to show our appreciation for the work of The Sick Children's Trust. It was easy to get my friends on board, as this was their way of expressing their support for my family and they know how much the charity helped us. They saw us when we were in bits and they knew how much help we received."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country, giving families with seriously ill children free accommodation just minutes from their child's hospital bedside. The charity relies entirely on voluntary donations and it costs £30 to support a family for one night. **Gary continues:**

"The skydive was pretty nerve-wracking and for a bunch of nine friends we were pretty silent in the lead up to the jump. As we flew to 12,000 feet, every minute felt long and tortuous. It seemed to take forever. But we had so many family members and friends there on the day to cheer us on which helped. And overriding the fear was the pleasure of knowing how much money we managed to raise for this amazing charity.

"Charlie has made a remarkable recovery, although he still suffers from chronic lung disease and a mild form of cerebral palsy; he is working with an excellent physiotherapist and is a happy healthy little boy, who can now crawl around and is trying to stand up. He was even able to high five me with his right hand after I completed the jump, which is something the doctors did not think he would ever do."

Stevenson House Manager, Alan Booth, who also took part in the charity skydive, supported Gary and Carly Jones whilst Charlie was receiving treatment in hospital. **Alan adds:**

"It was amazing to see Charlie there on the day with his family looking so happy and smiley and Gary and Carly often bring him along to see at Stevenson House, which is lovely.

Media:







Related Sectors:

Charities & non-profits ::

Related Keywords:

Skydive :: Charity :: Children :: Childcare :: Fundraising :: Sponsorship ::

Scan Me:

“The skydive was absolutely terrifying, but as a charity we rely on voluntary donations so we can continue to support families in the worst imaginable situations so I was determined to complete the challenge. The money raised will go towards supporting hundreds more families with ‘Home from Home’ accommodation when their child is seriously ill in hospital – and that’s why I faced my fears and took part!”

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

Company Contact: