Dad on fundraising mission to thank charity for ongoing support

Tuesday 6 November, 2018

A local dad has kicked off his fundraising mission by running the Royal Parks Half Marathon for The Sick Children's Trust, a charity that supported his family when his son required lifesaving treatment in a hospital far away from home.
Ryan Mathewson, 27, from Bedford, and his partner, Larissa Conley, were over the moon when baby William was born in June 2015. However, just 20 minutes later and struggling to breathe, William began to crash and was rushed to the neonatal unit at Bedford Hospital. 11 days later, ventilated, and showing no signs of improvement the decision was made to transfer William to The Rosie Hospital in Cambridge for specialist treatment. On arrival baby William was admitted onto neonatal intensive care unit and underwent rigorous tests. It was at this point that his parents were offered a room in Chestnut House, free 'Home from Home' accommodation run by The Sick Children's Trust. Dad, Ryan, who completed the iconic 13.1 miles Royal Parks Half Marathon in 2:13:42 and is planning future challenges, says:
"Chestnut House became our home. When we moved in we didn't know just how long our stay would be, but doctors continued to carry out all sorts of tests and we quickly became familiar with the specialists and nurses in charge of William's care. After two weeks, William was transitioned to the high dependency unit and we moved across to the charity's second 'Home from Home' in Cambridge, Acorn House. Acorn House was incredible too. A proper home, with a spacious kitchen, big bathrooms and amazing house staff who knew exactly what to say to us whenever we saw them. You can't imagine the relief of not having to go far from your child; it really removed enormous pressures, not just practically, but emotionally and financially too."
At five weeks old William was diagnosed with laryngomalacia and bronchomalacia, which meant the cartilage in his airways had not developed properly and, as a result, they were floppy and couldn't stay open when he was breathing. He was also diagnosed as having subglottic stenosis, which meant his airways were also very narrow. After failed attempts to take William off the ventilator it was decided that the only way forward would be for him to undergo tracheotomy surgery, to give him a new airway. Dad, Ryan, continues:

"William's surgery was a success, he woke up and then began to breathe unaided. After surgery he improved quickly, but the pressure was then on Larissa and I to learn how to administer his treatment, understand the tracheostomy tube and apply care. Usually this would have taken at least six weeks, but because we were staying in Acorn House and right there on site at all times, we learnt how to confidently care for William in under a month and got him home sooner."

"Since then there have been set backs of course. Over his first birthday he had a really bad spell, which meant we were transferred by emergency to Addenbrooke's. Since that emergency we have been back several times for small operations and procedures and Abi has done her best to provide us with a room in Acorn House, which means overnight we have recharged and been fresh and energised for William the next day."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country supporting around 4,000 families with seriously ill children in hospital every year. The charity relies entirely on voluntary donations and although the accommodation is free for families it costs the charity £30 to support a family for a night in one of its houses. Abi Abdel-aal, Chestnut House Manager, says:

"It is terrifying for any parent when they have a seriously ill child in hospital and as a charity we hope to help as many families as possible during such difficult times. The Sick Children's Trust relies entirely on voluntary donations so it means everything to us when families we have supported go on to fundraise for the charity.

"Ryan and Larissa have stayed with us a number of times and it is always nice to hear about William and how he is getting on. Now that William is doing so well we are grateful that Ryan feels ready to share his experience and congratulate him on completing the half marathon."
To get behind The Sick Children's Trust and sponsor Ryan visit his Just Giving site http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/ryanmathewsonrpfhm201812717
For further information about The Sick Children's Trust, please visit http://www.sickchildrenstrust.org/

Notes to Editors:

About The Sick Children's Trust

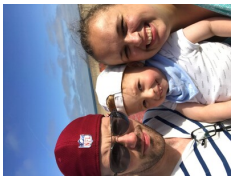
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The Sick Children’s Trust is working to a future where every family with a seriously ill child in hospital will be able to stay together, just minutes from their child’s bed during their treatment.

We believe keeping families together significantly improves the recovery of seriously ill children. We provide free, high-quality ‘Home from Home’ accommodation, as well as emotional and practical support, to families with sick children in hospital in the UK.

The Sick Children’s Trust was founded in 1982 by two paediatric specialists Dr Jon Pritchard and Professor James Malpas. Today we have ten ‘Homes from Home’ at major hospitals around the country where families can stay free of charge, for as long as they need whilst their child is undergoing treatment.

We support around 4,000 families every year, and there is a growing demand for our ‘Homes from Home’ as children must increasingly travel long distances to get the specialist treatment they need.
www.sickchildrenstrust.org

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