Dad returns to running after 20 year break to raise thousands for charity

Friday 14 February, 2020

A dad is returning to running 20 years after he last completed the Virgin Money London Marathon to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust, the charity which kept him by his son's hospital bedside.

Mark Arnold, 51 from Watford, will be retracing his steps on Sunday 26 April to complete his second London Marathon to raise money for the charity close to his heart.

In 2014, Mark's son, Thomas, was rushed to Addenbrooke's Hospital when his heart rate hit 175 beats per minute due to a lack of oxygen getting into his system. For three weeks Thomas was treated at the Cambridge hospital, undergoing an operation to open his airways before he was discharged. During this time his parents, Mark and Gislene, and his baby brother Henry were supported by The Sick Children's Trust's 'Home from Home' Acorn House. Mark is hoping to raise £3,000 for the charity to provide 100 nights of accommodation to other families with children in hospital.

To kick off his fundraising, Mark will be holding a Golf Day on Monday 16 March at Sandy Lodge, with tickets costing £82.50pp or £330 for a team of four. In addition to this, Gislene is baking away to sell cakes at her place at work which has so far raise £130. **Mark said:**

"Thomas had a few issues with sleep apnoea at that time and when things didn't improve, we were referred to Watford General. He was really struggling to breathe and was rushed to Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge. It was horrible. We wanted to stay together as a family, so I booked a hotel for the first night but that was at least 20 minutes away from Thomas and we were worried in case he became worse.

"That day, when we were up on the ward, we met someone from The Sick Children's Trust who, thankfully, offered us a place to stay at Acorn House. It was such a relief in so many ways. We were in Cambridge for three weeks and having to pay for a hotel would've been a huge financial burden, especially as I'm self-employed and Gislene was on maternity leave. Not only that, Henry was a newborn and needed feeding every few hours so it was important we could all be together and make sure Thomas was never alone.

"Being in hospital can be quite isolating. You're constantly worrying whether your child will be OK. Having a place to stay with your family really makes the situation easier. We met lots of families who had been there longer than us and didn't get to take their child home so I'd like to raise £3,000 to make sure others can stay together when their seriously ill child is in hospital.

"This will be my second marathon; the last one I did was in 2000 and for the last 20 years I've mentally blocked out the pain! My training is going well and I should be ready come April."

No parent with a seriously ill child in hospital should have to worry about how they can be by their bedside. The Sick Children's Trust makes sure families can be together by giving them a place to stay in a 'Home from Home'. It costs £30 to support a family for one night. **Samantha Lloyd, Events Manager at The Sick Children's Trust, said:**

"Mark has an ambitious target but we know that he will reach it! We'd like to thank Mark for taking on the London marathon for The Sick Children's Trust, by doing this he will be giving another family one less thing to worry about when their child is in hospital.

"Good luck Mark, we will be cheering you along the route!"

To buy tickets to Mark's Golf Day on Monday 16 March, please visit: http://www.markarnoldgolf.com/store/c1/Featured_Products.html and to make a donation to his fundraising page go to: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/mark-arnold24

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

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