Devoted Dad to drive miles in memory of baby Lewis and raise money for charity

Friday 14 September, 2018

A devoted dad is gearing up to take on the 2018 Screwball Rally this month to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust in memory of his baby, Lewis, who tragically passed away at just four days old.

Gareth Wood, 34, from Blyth in Northumberland, will take on the 2,500 mile drive across eight countries over a five day period for the charity which provided him with free 'Home from Home' accommodation at its Crawford House in Newcastle upon Tyne, whilst doctors fought for his son's life at Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI).

Lewis was delivered by caesarean at Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital on 6 December 2017. Within minutes of being placed in his mum, Tracy's, arms, he turned blue and began to experience severe breathing difficulties. Unsure what was wrong with him, doctors made an immediate decision to transfer the newborn to the paediatric intensive care unit (PICU) at RVI. Following further tests, paediatric specialists identified multiple developmental problems with Lewis' organs within his chest cavity. Sadly his condition was too severe and, despite the doctors' best efforts, Lewis passed away just four days later. In his memory, Dad Gareth, along with his close friend Mark Wheatley, is now taking on this challenge to raise money for Crawford House, which kept him by his son's bedside during his painfully short life. **Gareth, a Railway Worker, says:**

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"Throughout the pregnancy we were completely unaware that something was wrong with our baby because in all the scans he appeared healthy. We were in absolute shock when Lewis was born, to see him so poorly. One minute we were celebrating the birth of our beautiful baby boy and the next we were in a total panic as he struggled for every breath.

"He was rushed to RVI and for eight hours we were separated from our seriously ill baby. Every second felt like an hour. We weren't even sure he'd be alive by the time we got there. It was torture. At the hospital, the doctors discovered that Lewis' chest organs had failed to develop properly. He was completely missing his left lung, had serious problems with his heart and had severe tracheal stenosis causing obstruction to his airway. Our heads were all over the place. He had looked healthy at first."

Gareth and Tracy were told that there son would need to remain at the specialist hospital for urgent treatment. It was at this point that they were told about The Sick Children's Trust's 'Home from Home' Crawford House. **Gareth continues:**

"As Tracy was transferred to the RVI, she had a bed on the postnatal ward, but it was gone midnight when we arrived and I had nowhere to sleep. Thankfully, the nurses told me about Crawford House and that it was a 'Home from Home' run by a charity called The Sick Children's Trust – I was told I could stay as long as I needed to, totally free of charge.

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“I couldn’t believe such a place even existed. It was the first I’d heard of the charity and was exactly what I needed. The facilities were amazing and the staff in the house knew just how to support me and, most importantly, it meant I was never more than a couple of minutes from my baby’s side.”

At just four days old, and with Lewis’ condition rapidly deteriorating, Gareth and Tracy had to say a heart-breaking goodbye to their beautiful baby boy who passed away peacefully in their arms. **Gareth, who hopes to raise £1,000 for The Sick Children’s Trust, continues:**

“I knew I wanted to give something back to The Sick Children’s Trust because the charity allowed me to spend every possible second I could with my son. He will never be forgotten and we’re so grateful for the time we got to spend with him. I hope that we raise as much as possible for Lewis so that he would be proud of his dad.”

The Sick Children’s Trust supports around 4,000 families with seriously ill children in hospital every year, keeping them close to their loved one’s hospital bedside. Over the last year, Crawford House has helped nearly 700 families from the North East and beyond stay together whilst their child has been receiving specialist treatment at RVI. It costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night with ‘Home from Home’ accommodation. **Crawford House Manager, Andrew Leadbitter, says:**

“Gareth and his family have suffered a huge loss and they are all in our thoughts. We’re humbled that Gareth has decided to take on this challenge to raise money for other families in memory of his baby. From the bottom of our hearts we’d like to say thank you and wish Gareth and Mark the very best of luck.”

To sponsor Gareth, please click here: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/gaz-n-wheatza

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

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