Dominic and Molly – role models and inspiration for young people with heart conditions

Thursday 23 August, 2018

Two young people born with serious heart conditions have gone on to achieve academic success at A level and GCSE and have high hopes and plans for the future.

As infants, Dominic Davies and Molly Meehan provided the inspiration behind a children's book, *Rosie goes red, Violet goes blue* and *Molly's Dolly*, a rag doll with surgical scars. Over the years the books and dolls have been provided by the Children's Heart Federation (CHF) to hundreds of children helping them understand and come to terms with their heart conditions and treatment.

Dominic and Molly have both had major heart surgery twice and several setbacks along the way and Dominic is on the waiting list for a heart transplant.

This hasn't stopped them achieving academically, pursuing their interests and having fun. Dominic is an ambassador for young adults at St Elizabeth's hospice in Ipswich and co-wrote the lyrics for Always, a song released last Christmas to raise funds. Molly enjoys writing and public speaking, watching TV and going to concerts, she went to her school prom earlier this year.

Dominic achieved A in History and B in English Literature in his A level results last week and plans to study Archaeology at University.

Molly from Luton, who today received her GCSE results passing 8 GCSEs with good grades including an A in Health and Social Care plans to be a nurse, so she can *"help other children like me".*

Anne-Keatley Clarke Chief Executive of CHF comments:

"Dominic and Molly started by being the inspiration behind ***Rosie and Violet*** *and* ***Molly's Dolly*** *but they have gone on to be inspirations in their own right. Their achievements show that having a heart condition doesn't need to hold you back. I wish them every success in the future".*

ends

Further information for editors

About Dominic

Dominic now 20, was born in March 1998 with tricuspid atresia with VA discordance and pulmonary stenosis, he had his first major heart operation at four days old and the second stage of the operation the Bi-Directional Glenn was carried out as emergency surgery when he was three.

Before this second operation Dominic would draw himself with blue hands, feet and lips but after the operation he coloured them pink! This made his mother Fran aware that he understood more about the condition than anyone realised. She was inspired to write *Rosie goes red, Violet goes blue*, a short story to help children with heart conditions and their siblings have a simple understanding of the impact of congenital heart disease. *

Unfortunately, Dominic was found to also have other medical problems: idiopathic eosinophilic colitis was diagnosed at three months old and hypermobility later still. He also had a very rare tumour age two and needed surgery for obstructive tonsillitis. He also suffered from life threatening pneumonia and septicaemia.

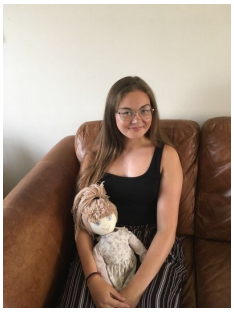
The third
stage of palliative surgery, Total Cavo-Pulmonary
Connection, was completed at the age of six, giving Dom a Fontan Circulation.

In addition, the impact of Dominic's restricted diet and the medications he took to help manage severe colitis caused brittle bones and he endured a number of low impact fractures. But Dominic's catchphrase is "I'll manage", he attended mainstream school and despite missing many days due to ill health or appointments, he won a prize for determination at the end of primary school.

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Secondary school was more of a challenge, but Dominic completed GCSEs before moving on to a very supportive sixth form. During this time Dominic's health deteriorated and he missed a lot of lessons, it took him four years to attend enough for him to be able to take his exams. At the end of November 2017 at the age of 19, having developed post-Fontan protein-losing enteropathy and heart failure in 2015, Dominic was placed on the waiting list for a heart transplant.

Mid-August 2018 Dominic visited the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle (the only place in the UK that performs heart transplants for adults with congenital heart disease) to complete a comprehensive medical review (further to being listed for transplant at the end of 2017). This was also a chance to go through the formal processes required for formally consenting to a heart transplant, so that when the call comes he can proceed without delays. (He has now been waiting for a suitable donor for more than eight months and there is no knowing when the call might come). Later that week, on August 16th 2018, Dominic received his A level results and was delighted to achieve an A in History and B in English Literature, to add to the A level in English Language that he passed last year.

In his own words:

"I'm incredibly pleased with it. I didn't expect to get as much as I did, I would have been happy with a C in everything."

Dominic reckons his character traits of being ambitious, determined and proud have taken him far and would earn him a rightful place in the house of Slytherin if he ever got to Hogwarts!

Dominic Davies is interviewed by Ipswich Star

About Molly

Molly was born in 2002 with truncus arteriosus, she had open heart surgery at three weeks old. When Molly got older around the time she was about to start primary school, she began to question her mother Ita about her scars.

Molly's questions and the difficulty Ita had trying to explain the scars and the condition gave her an idea. Ita contacted the CHF information line with the suggestion that they provided rag dolls with surgical scars to match those of a child. CHF Chief Executive, Anne Keatley-Clarke quickly saw how the dolls would benefit many other children with heart conditions and investigated how the dolls could be created. The first scarred doll produced was given to Molly and the dolls were named 'Molly's Dollies'** in her honour.

The original doll still sits in Molly's room.

Molly says:

"I am so proud of what this doll has achieved. Hundreds of heart children can educate themselves and understand who they are and be proud of what they have gone through."

When Molly was twelve she underwent further surgery at Great Ormond Street Hospital and had a Melody valve fitted. She counts herself lucky to have had so little treatment compared to some children with heart conditions but in November 2016 Molly contracted infective endocarditis. This made her feel very ill and it took her a long time to fully recover and meant a long absence from school.

Now Molly is 16, has completed her GCSEs and achieved eight passes with good grades including an A in Health and Social Care, she went to the school prom. She enjoys writing and public speaking, watching TV and going to concerts, eventually she would like to become a nurse, helping children like herself and Dominic.

Her mother Ita adds:

"I hope the Molly's Dollies continue to help heart children everywhere. I am proud of Molly's achievements and the legacy of the Molly's Dollies which Molly and I created together."

Further information about Molly's Dollies

Download an application form for a Molly's dolly

Molly's Dolly information sheet

About the Children's Heart Federation

CHF is the leading UK children's heart charity and works with individuals and organizations concerned with children and young people with health and educational needs due to acquired or congenital heart conditions.

Further information

CHF was registered with the Charity Commission in 1988 and is administered and managed by a board of trustees.

www.chfed.org.uk

*The book is produced and distributed to children with heart conditions by CHF.

** Molly's Dollies are available free of charge to all children in the UK with a heart condition after referral by a healthcare professional.

Company Contact: