Father training hard for half marathon to thank charity who helped his family

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A local dad, who was supported by The Sick Children's Trust when his son was born seriously ill with sepsis, is running the Leicester Half Marathon on 15 October to raise money and awareness for the charity.

Craig Spilane, 26, from Leicester, along with his partner, Emily Davies, 24, should have been elated when their son, Jude, was born earlier this year. Instead the couple were left terrified when they were told their baby had sepsis and was in serious respiratory distress. After 24 hours and showing no signs of improvement, the decision was made to transfer Jude to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at The Rosie Hospital in Cambridge – over 90 miles away from home. **Dad Craig, who is a Warehouse Operative for TNT, says:**

"When Jude was born he didn't cry and instead he grunted with every breath. He was rushed to the neonatal unit at our local hospital, Leicester General Hospital, where they put him on antibiotics straightaway, but because he was losing oxygen he had to be put on a ventilator to stop his airway from collapsing.

"When he was transferred to The Rosie Hospital in Cambridge we were distraught as it was so far away from home – but now looking back it was the best place for him. We were so scared that we were going to lose him. It was horrible to see him with lines all over his body, tubes feeding him and wires all around him."

During Jude's ten day treatment in Cambridge, The Sick Children's Trust gave his parents free 'Home from Home' accommodation at Chestnut House, which is located just below NICU, minutes from their son's hospital bedside. **Craig, who has been training for the Leicester Half Marathon over the past few months, continues:**

"Being given a room at Chestnut House when Jude was ill meant that Emily and I could stay at the hospital and there was a direct phone line in our room straight to NICU where Jude was. It helped with the anxiety of leaving Jude's bedside – whether that was to get a bit of sleep or make a cup of tea – as the nurses could contact us 24 hours a day. It was so comforting to know that if anything changed during the night we could be with him in minutes.

"Chestnut House was absolutely amazing. When we were told the room there was free of charge we couldn't quite believe it! We had no idea that The Sick Children's Trust existed to help families like us. When we were desperate they gave us a home as well as emotional support and comfort. We also got to meet other parents who had babies in The Rosie Hospital who had been staying there for a while and going through the unthinkable like Emily and I.

"It was such a scary time for our family. Not only did we have to be strong for Jude, but we were away from our five year old daughter Evie, which was really tough. Thankfully because of The Sick Children's Trust, she was able to visit us at Chestnut House and we could spend some quality time with her in the playroom.

"Because of the support we were given, Emily and I wanted to raise money and help raise awareness of The Sick Children's Trust. I have been up at 5.45am every other morning training hard for the race because I thought that if Jude could pull through his ordeal then I can definitely get to the end of a half marathon."

Craig will race alongside his brother James, cousin Daniel, Emily's father Lee and their friend Matt Gould on 15 October. The group have already exceeded their fundraising target of £500 with donations still being made. **Mum, Emily, who will support her partner on the day along with baby Jude and Evie, says:**

"After ten days at The Rosie Hospital Jude was breathing on his own and he was able to be transferred back to Leicester. In a strange way I missed Chestnut House and the team who supported us whilst we were there, but I was also glad to be home. I still remember being in Cambridge as if it was yesterday, it was such a traumatic time for us. Abi and her team at Chestnut House were so supportive and they looked after us when we were sick with worry.

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“Jude is doing really well now and although he still has regular check-ups at Leicester Royal Infirmary, which I am so grateful for, he is a happy healthy five month old baby. Now that he is getting stronger day by day, we are going to continue to try and raise money for The Sick Children’s Trust and also raise awareness about sepsis because it almost took Jude from us.”

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 the charity £30 to support a family for one night. **Chestnut House Manager, Abi Abdel-aal, says:**

“When I met Craig and Emily they were exhausted after two days with no sleep. It was such a relief for them to have a comfortable ‘Home from Home’ to stay in. I am so pleased we were able to support them and it was lovely to meet little Evie when she came to visit her parents. It was a tough time for them all, but Jude made a remarkable recovery and thankfully got home quickly.

“As a charity we rely on voluntary donations so we can continue to run our ten ‘Homes from Home’ across the country, supporting families with seriously ill children in hospital. The money Craig and his family will raise from the half marathon it will make a huge difference to many families who need our support.”

To get behind The Sick Children’s Trust and sponsor Craig, his family and friends visit his Just Giving site https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/craig-spilane1

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

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