Friend takes on 'The Grizzly' in memory of best pal

Friday 4 March, 2016

A dedicated woman is carrying out her best friend's final wish to run one of the toughest races in the UK to raise money for a charity that supported her family throughout her life.

On 13 March, Linsey Smith, 28 from Thaxted, Great Dunmow in Essex, will be running 'The Grizzly' – a 20mile challenge where runners brave multi-terrain surfaces including mud, shingle, beaches and the 'stairway to heaven' to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust. As a child, Linsey's friend Gemma underwent two years of specialist treatment at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH), as she battled against a Wilms tumour in her kidney, and then a secondary tumour on her lung. During this time, her family were supported by The Sick Children's Trust. Sadly, Gemma passed away from breast cancer last year at the young age of 33 and Linsey is now carrying out her wish to raise money for the charity.

Linsey, who was encouraged by Gemma to take on the challenges, wants to thank the charity on Gemma's behalf and help more families in similar situations. She says: “Gemma was a very inspirational person – as well as a little crazy like me! She went through so much, and fought so hard but she kept going and stayed strong. She's my inspiration, my motivation and keeps me going through all my training. I know whatever pain I feel, it's no comparison to what Gemma was going through. But she kept smiling and pushing forward so why can't I?

“I'm training hard at the moment, covering up to 16 miles and heading to the gym three times a week. I know I'll be able to do it - I'm familiar with the route and I have a friend who has run it before and she's giving me tips and advice. But I know I will finish it because I'm doing this for Gemma, and the amazing charity that helped her family so much."

In 1986, Gemma was diagnosed with cancer at just four-years-old and was transferred to GOSH – over 60 miles away from home. During this time her family were supported by The Sick Children's Trust which gave them a 'Home from Home' at Rainbow House, located just a few minutes away from the hospital. During 1986, Gemma's parents, Paul and Pauline, stayed at Rainbow House twice so that they could be there for their daughter.

Gemma's sister, Rosalyn Kinsley, who also stayed in Rainbow House alongside Gemma's Mum and Dad, says: “Staying in Rainbow House helped us all so much. It meant we could all be together in London when Gemma was in GOSH.

“Mum and Dad felt The Sick Children's Trust helped to keep us together as a family and helped keep things as normal as possible. We even had Gemma's fifth birthday party at Rainbow House with the other families there. We baked cakes, made sandwiches and had a fun party tea.

“The charity would always help Mum and Dad with anything they needed – and the staff were lovely. Since staying at the house, we've given lots of donations so that the good work the charity does can continue."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country and last year supported around 3,600 families with free accommodation close to their sick child's bedside. Alongside private bedrooms, each house has communal bathrooms, kitchens and living rooms which can be accessed by the families receiving support. **Community Fundraiser, Clare Hanley- Humphries, says:**

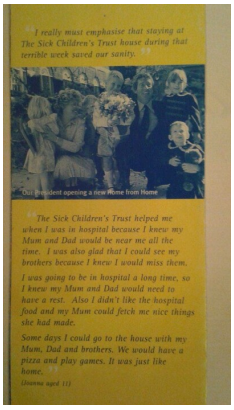
“Linsey is doing something incredible for The Sick Children's Trust and it's all the more important because she is doing it in memory of her dear friend Gemma. We're so pleased we could support Gemma's family while she was undergoing treatment as a child and its very endearing that we had a special place in Gemma's heart. We wish Linsey all the best for her run and can't wait to hear all about it."

It costs The Sick Children's Trust £28 per night to support a family in one of its 'Homes from Home'. If you would like to help Linsey reach her target, please visit: www.justgiving.com/Linsey-Smith

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