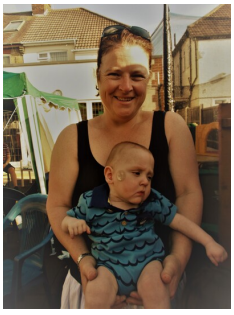
Friends of family whose baby boy was born at just 23 weeks and 5 days raise £2,080 for charity

Tuesday 21 August, 2018

Media:

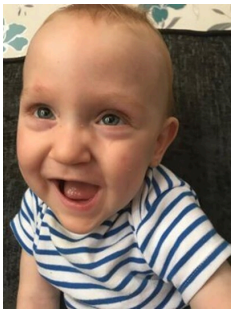












Two local ladies have been on a fundraising mission for The Sick Children's Trust to thank the charity for supporting their friends with free 'Home from Home' accommodation when their son required lifesaving treatment miles away from home.

Nikki Nicholls, 44, and Kate Ward, 44, both nurses from Southend-on-Sea, had the creative idea of organising a giant raffle to raise money for the charity. They designed a huge 500-square numbered grid, selling off each square for £10. The owner of the winning square, whose number was drawn at random from a hat, received a £500 cash prize and the remainder of the funds raised has been donated to The Sick Children's Trust.

The pair decided to organise the fundraiser in support of their friend Anita Hyams, whose son William was born 16 weeks early and underwent specialist, lifesaving treatment at The Royal London Children's Hospital for the first three months of his life. Throughout this time Anita, her husband Dan, and their two young daughters, Marion and Olivia, were given a room at Stevenson House, a 'Home from Home' run by the charity and located just moments from the paediatric intensive care unit where William was being treated. **Nikki, who works alongside Anita as a critical care nurse at Southend University Hospital, says:**

"William's start to life was very rocky. The doctors made it clear to Anita and Dan that it was going to be an uphill struggle if William was to survive and that he needed to grow without any further complications. He remained on a ventilator for 45 days, which was incredibly traumatic for the family.

"It is very clear to everyone just how much The Sick Children's Trust helped our friends throughout such a distressing ordeal and, as a nurse and mum of four myself, I really understood how much it meant to them to be able to stay as a family in Stevenson House. They couldn't have been more complimentary about the amazing staff who supported them or the facilities, and it also took away a lot of financial pressure for Anita and Dan.

"The Sick Children's Trust had such a big impact on our friends; it is because of this that Kate and I decided we wanted to raise money for the charity that helped them. We created the grid and tried to sell the 500 tickets to friends, family members and by word of mouth and it went really well! We started selling the tickets last October after William was transferred back to Southend University Hospital and pulled the winning ticket just a few weeks ago. I can't believe we managed to raise £1,800 for The Sick Children's Trust. We're so pleased as we know this money will make a huge difference in supporting more families with seriously ill children in hospital."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country, supporting families like William's with free accommodation, whilst their child is being treated in hospital. **Mum, Anita Hyams, who finally took William home for the first time on 8 October 2017, 123 days after his birth, says:**

"We can't thank Nikki and Kate enough for raising such an incredible amount for the charity that was our lifeline during a very dark time. That first week after William arrived was terrible, but being given a room in a 'Home from Home' meant his sisters could stay with us which was important as they were very distressed and we needed to be together as a family. The staff at Stevenson House were so fantastic with them and knew exactly what to say to cheer them up. I will never forget how kind they were to my daughters. Stevenson House really helped the girls cope, which in turn helped us to cope! They loved the TV rooms and the playroom and I was able to cook us normal family dinners in the kitchen – being so young that kind of continuity was very important for them."

"All my friends know our story and what we have been through and if they didn't know about the amazing work of The Sick Children's Trust before we stayed at Stevenson House, they do now! As a result, everyone is working hard to help me raise both money and awareness for such an important cause, close to my heart. As a nurse myself, I know how important it is to a child's recovery to have their family close by and The Sick Children's Trust facilitates this. We can never thank the charity enough!"

The Sick Children's Trust relies entirely on voluntary donations and, whilst accommodation in a 'Home from Home' is free for families, it costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. **Irma Cambron,**

Stevenson House Assistant Manager, says:

“Anita, Dan and the girls spent over three months with us at Stevenson House and we all followed William’s progress closely. It was such an incredible day for them when he was transferred back home – the family were over the moon.

“I am so glad to hear from Anita that William continues to improve and will soon celebrate his first birthday. It is so touching that Anita’s friends have taken on this challenge to fundraise for us – the £2,000 they have raised will go a long way towards supporting more families, like the Hyams, when they need it most.”

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







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