Great Yarmouth mum set for head shave to raise £2,000 for charity that kept her by daughter's hospital bedside

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A grateful mum is saying goodbye to her golden locks next month as she takes on a sponsored head shave to raise £2,000 for The Sick Children's Trust which kept her by her daughter's hospital bedside.

13 years ago, Natalie Engstrom, from Great Yarmouth, sat by her baby's incubator willing her to fight another day. Just minutes after she was born, Tegan began struggling to breathe and needed to be resuscitated four times. This is when a nurse noticed a hole in the roof of her mouth (cleft palate) which was what was causing her breathing difficulties. Tegan was diagnosed with Pierre Robins syndrome – a condition that affects just 50 babies in the UK every year. Due to this she needed to be transferred from The Friarage in Northallerton to Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI) for emergency treatment. During this time, Natalie and her husband Kevin were given a place to stay by The Sick Children's Trust at Crawford House. Crawford House is one of the charity's 'Homes from Home' located just a few minutes' walk away from the children's wards at the RVI. Having a place to stay meant that both parents could stay by their daughter's bedside.

36 year old mum Natalie, whose head shave will be taking place on Saturday 21 August, wants to raise much-needed funds for the charity to help other families stay together. She said:

"Kevin and I were young when we had Tegan and we didn't have much money between us. We were far away from home, based in Northallerton with the army and I was on maternity leave. Without The Sick Children's Trust giving us a 'Home from Home' we would've really struggled. We couldn't afford a hotel so would've slept in the car.

"Being at Crawford House meant we were so close to Tegan. You can never be prepared for your child being rushed off to another hospital far away and not even being able to hold your baby. We arrived in Newcastle, not knowing where our baby was or what was happening but I remember being told about The Sick Children's Trust. They said there was room for us at Crawford House which meant we didn't have to leave Tegan in hospital alone. We were so close that we could even go to see Tegan late at night.

"When we left, all we had was £5 to give as a donation. I knew that Crawford House was entirely run on donations and I have always wanted to do more, it was just we couldn't afford to then. We have since moved from Northallerton back home to Great Yarmouth and are in a position to do something.

"I know just how much difference this money will make to families – we spoke to lots when we were at Crawford House who had been there for months. For us it was a lifesaver. So, while I am really nervous about shaving off my hair I know it'll grow back and the money I raise will be worth it."

This year, Crawford House is celebrating 25 years of keeping families together by their child's hospital bedside. Opened in 1996, The Sick Children's Trust 'Home from Home' has supported over 12,000 families, like Natalie's, giving them a place to stay and one less thing to worry about when their child is in hospital.

Tegan, who will turn 13 years old later this year, is now doing really well and is encouraging her mum to shave off her hair. She said:

"When I found out what mum is doing the first thing I wanted her to know is how proud I am, I know people have been saying she will regret it but I know my mum and she won't. I am so proud that she has confidence to do it and also raising money for an amazing charity that not only helps families but helped ours and had an incredible impact. I want to say thanks for supporting us when we needed it the most."

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It costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night, and over the years it is thanks to people like Natalie, who has decided to take on a fundraising challenge for the charity, that Crawford House has become a 'Home from Home' to thousands of families. **Alexia Addis, Regional Fundraising Officer, said:**

"We know that for Natalie this head shave is a big personal challenge and we are so thankful to her for choosing to do this for us and for the families we support.

"It is humbling to know that families who we have supported many years ago are still so passionate about helping us to continue to be there for other families with seriously ill children in hospital. At such an uncertain time, having a warm and comfortable place to stay can really relieve just some stresses experienced when a child is in hospital.

"We're wishing Natalie the best of luck!"

To sponsor Natalie, visit: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/natalie-engstrom

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