Keen cyclist rides over 170 miles to thank charity for supporting his friends

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Gary Westerby, 34, and Rob, 32, have cycled over 170 miles in memory of their friend's son who died last year at just eleven days old.

Acey Gardner was diagnosed with a congenital diaphragmatic hernia (CDH) at his 20 week scan – a birth defect which occurs when the diaphragm doesn't form properly and other organs enter the chest cavity, which prevents the lungs from developing. He was given a 50% chance of surviving when he was born five weeks early, weighing just 4lb 3oz.

Acey was immediately transferred to Sheffield Children's Hospital and at five days old he underwent major specialist surgery to pull his organs down from the chest cavity and repair the diaphragm. Sadly, Acey's lungs weren't strong enough and six days later he passed away.

During this tragic time, Mum Becky, Dad Simon and their three year old son Ollie, were supported at Magnolia House – free 'Home from Home' accommodation run by The Sick Children's Trust. **Mum Becky says:**

"Without Magnolia House, we wouldn't have been able to stay so close to Acey. And because of it we could be with our son 24 hours a day. If it hadn't been for The Sick Children's Trust, we would have been left with the agonising ordeal of having to travel to and from the hospital every day – a 2.5 hour round trip! It would have been horrible having to leave our son, not knowing if he would make it through the night.

"Whilst staying at one of The Sick Children's Trust's 'Home from Home' is free of charge, it costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. They rely entirely on voluntary income to meet this cost and I am so grateful to my friend Gary for taking on this cycling challenge to raise money for the charity which is a lifeline for any family that may find themselves in this terrible situation."

Last month Gary, along with Rob, took on the Coast to Coast cycle challenge from Blackpool North Pier to Cleethorpes Pier. The duo pedalled for two days, raising £1,900 for The Sick Children's Trust. **Gary says:**

"We decided to turn our cycling challenge into a fundraiser because we were planning it at the time Becky and her family were going through everything with Acey and we wanted to thank the charity for their support at such a difficult time.

"Having Magnolia House meant Becky and her family could see Acey whenever they liked – day or night. Because of The Sick Children's Trust, Becky, Simon and Ollie could spend Acey's last moments by his side. I know that meant a lot to them."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the UK – supporting around 4,000 families with seriously ill children in hospital every year. **Ann Wyatt, Magnolia House Manager says:**

"We are so grateful to Gary and Rob for taking on the 170 mile cycling challenge to fundraise for us. We supported Becky, Simon and Ollie at Magnolia House which is located on the hospital grounds, and meant Acey's family were just minutes from his hospital bedside. Acey and his family are always in our thoughts, and through such a tragic loss we're comforted to know that by providing 'Home from Home' accommodation, they could be with him right up until

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that final goodbye.

“It costs us £30 to support a charity for one night and we rely entirely on voluntary donations to do this, so Gary and Rob’s fundraising will go towards supporting more families with seriously ill children in hospital – keeping them together when it matters the most.”

To sponsor Gary and Rob, please click here:

https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/C2C-2017

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