

Kent schoolgirl and heart condition hero raises over £1700 for children's heart charity ECHO

Monday 27 February, 2023

LONDON, February 22, 2023 -- 9-year-old Erith school girl Amaris Raji has raised over £1700 for Evelina Children's Heart Organisation (ECHO), a charity that provides a wide range of support to children with heart conditions and their families.

Amaris was born with complex congenital heart disease (including criss-cross heart, dextrocardia, ventricular septal defect and double outlet right ventricle with sub-valvar and valvar pulmonary stenosis). She goes to a local Brownies group and decided to raise money for the charity to work towards getting her Charities and Influencers badge.

She has had two open heart surgeries at Evelina Children's Hospital – the first one at eight months old and the second one just before she turned seven during Covid – and ECHO is very special to her and mum Belinda Raji.

Just after new year Amaris set herself a challenge to ride a half marathon within 20 days, completing it before the end of January. She set herself a target of £150, which she raised before even starting her challenge, and she's now exceeded £1700. Amaris said: "I get very tired when I do anything sporty, and it was particularly hard on really cold mornings, but the contributions kept me going, especially the last few days when I kept smashing my personal best in terms of the distance I rode. Mummy says if I put good into the world it will come back. I feel really proud of myself and the recognition that I have received."

The objective of the fundraising ride was to help ECHO to provide support to other families who are going through similar experiences. Belinda said: "Amaris is an IVF baby – she was the fourth try, so it was terribly upsetting when we found out at the 20-week scan to hear of her heart defect.

"When Amaris had her first operation I remember she received an ECHO bear and a rep kindly showed us the parent room. There were children on the ward that had been there for months, and their families were getting a lot of support from ECHO.

"When Amaris had her second open heart surgery, she was affected mentally by what was happening. She had several sessions with the psychologist, which took place in The Lodge, funded by ECHO. It was a lovely room that was a welcoming environment and a safe space for Amaris to talk about her feelings. After seeing how heart surgery affected Amaris when she was older I could really see the benefits of the work that ECHO does."

Having now smashed her target (and gained her Brownies' badge), Amaris would like to further help the charity by inspiring others to mark ECHO's 40th birthday, which takes place in June of this year. "I was one of the top 10 per cent fundraisers for January on the Just Giving website @Echoukcharity – secretly I now want to reach £2000."

Samantha Johnson, Chief Executive at ECHO commented: "It goes without saying that we are hugely grateful to Amaris for the phenomenal amount of money she has raised, which has allowed us to support so many children with heart conditions and their families.

"But wouldn't it also be incredible if other people could help celebrate what Amaris has achieved and the support ECHO has provided over the last four decades. Whether that's doing 40 laps of your school playground, a 40-minute bike ride very week for the month of June or a 40-mile bike ride, even if you don't want to get on a bike, you could hold a wear your cycling kit to work day or host a cycle themed quiz night with friends and family."

Creating a [Facebook](#) or [JustGiving Fundraiser](#) is a great way to tell your story and don't forget to snap a selfie or even video of your challenge and share it with ECHO on social media @echoukcharity using the hashtag #ridewithamaris or email it to ECHO at hello@echo-uk.org and they will share it.

Alternatively, if you would rather donate to Amaris' cause direct go to her JustGiving page: <https://www.justgiving.com/page/amarisbikeride2023>.

Media:



Notes for Editors

Belinda and Amaris Raji are happy to be interviewed. To interview or for photos and video, please contact ECHO Communications Coordinator Louise Creasy on 07525 833210 or louise@echo-uk.org.

For more information on the Evelina Children's Heart Organisation (ECHO), please contact Samantha Johnson, Chief Executive at ECHO on samantha@echo-uk.org or by phone 07730146154.

ECHO website: www.echo-uk.org | social media: [@echoukcharity](https://twitter.com/echoukcharity)

About ECHO: ECHO supports children and young people with heart conditions and their families treated by Evelina London, Royal Brompton and Harefield, and their networks of local hospitals. ECHO provides support from the moment of diagnosis, throughout any treatment and care pathway or bereavement. Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) is the most common type of birth defect, almost 1 in every 100 babies is born with a heart condition. ECHO is a Registered Charity number 1146494. ECHO is an independent charity and is not part of the Evelina London Children's Hospital.



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