Local mum to run London Marathon to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust

Tuesday 5 March, 2019

A grateful mum whose son required emergency lifesaving treatment after he was born seriously ill will be running the Virgin Money London Marathon to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust.

Mum of three, Susan Lea, 40, from St. Neots, will be taking on her first marathon on Sunday 14 April in a bid to raise £5,000 for The Sick Children's Trust to thank the charity for giving her and her family free 'Home from Home' accommodation when her son, Jasper, required lifesaving treatment miles away from home.

In August 2017 Jasper was born, floppy and unresponsive, at Hinchingbrooke Hospital. Susan had undergone an emergency caesarean after suffering from a prolapsed umbilical cord during labour. Jasper was diagnosed with severe hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy (HIE), a brain dysfunction caused by a reduction in the supply of oxygen to the brain and other organs. In a bid to save his life, Jasper was rushed to The Rosie Hospital in Cambridge where he underwent 72 hours of specialist cooling therapy on the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) in an attempt to reduce the level of brain damage. For the six weeks that followed, Susan and her husband, Alex, were supported in free 'Home from Home' accommodation at Chestnut House run by The Sick Children's Trust.

Susan, who hopes to complete the London Marathon in four hours, says:

"As Jasper left with Alex for Cambridge just hours after he'd been born, I had to deal with the horrible reality that I might not see my baby ever again. Fortunately, the next day a bed was found for me on the maternity ward in Cambridge so I could be reunited with my son and two days later - when I was discharged - I moved into Chestnut House with Alex. At this point, when he was just a few days old, we were told Jasper might not survive the weekend. His condition was so severe that we were advised not to leave the hospital in case we were not able to get back to him in time. Having a room in Chestnut House meant we could stay with Jasper, making all the difference during the worst days of our lives.

"The charity allowed us to stay by Jasper's bedside as he fought for his life. With a comfortable bedroom, clean bathroom and fully stocked kitchen, it became our second home and importantly was a place where we could look after our older sons, George and Freddie, when they visited us with their grandparents. It meant we could cook them proper meals, as if we were at home, and they loved playing with all the different toys in the playroom. Chestnut House enabled us to be a family and experience a degree of normality, at a time that was far from that. It was a lifesaver for us all."

Miraculously Jasper survived the first weekend of his life and spent a further six weeks on NICU at The Rosie Hospital before he was transferred back to Hinchingbrooke. Two weeks later his parents were able to take him home.

Susan continues:

"We feel very lucky to have been supported in free 'Home from Home' accommodation and understand that many other families do not have that opportunity. When your child is sick there are so many things to worry about - finding a way to stay close to them should not be one of them. The Sick Children's Trust took that worry away and enabled us to focus on Jasper's health. Jasper is now home, happy and adored by us all."

Susan is joining #TeamSCT this year and hopes to raise £5,000 to help the charity continue supporting families across its ten 'Homes from Home'. She is asking her friends and family to make donations to the charity at her 40th birthday celebrations this month.

She adds:

"I am really stuck into my training programme and can be found up and running at 5.45am most mornings. Obviously, as mother to three young boys and with a full time job, I am incredibly busy and training is taking up a lot of time.

"I never thought I would run a marathon but I also never thought I would be so indebted to an

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organisation that I would want to. My fundraising is going well and I am hopeful that I will raise £5000. Although I am a little nervous about the upcoming race, I am also excited and pleased to be able to give something back to the charity that gave us so much. Alex is bringing the boys to watch me and members of my family and friends will also be there to cheer me on – that's all the support I need!"

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country, giving families with seriously ill children in hospital free accommodation just minutes from their child's bedside. The charity relies entirely on voluntary donations and it costs £30 to support a family for one night.

Chestnut House Manager, Abi Abdel-aal, says:

"We're delighted to welcome Susan on to #TeamSCT and she has set herself an incredible fundraising target of £5,000!

"On site 'Home from Home' accommodation is vitally important to the emotional well-being of any family with a child in hospital, especially for families like Susan's who were told it was unlikely Jasper would survive the weekend. To have had to make the daily two hour round trip would not have been an option.

"I wish Susan all the best and look forward to hearing how the London Marathon goes. With a young family and lots of commitments, it is certainly a very big challenge, but we will be here to support her all the way."

To help Susan reach her £5,000 target, please visit: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/sue-beebylea

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

The Sick Children's Trust is working to a future where every family with a seriously ill child in hospital will be able to stay together, just minutes from their child's bed during their treatment.

We believe keeping families together significantly improves the recovery of seriously ill children. We provide free, high-quality 'Home from Home' accommodation, as well as emotional and practical support, to families with sick children in hospital in the UK.

The Sick Children's Trust was founded in 1982 by two paediatric specialists Dr Jon Pritchard and Professor James Malpas. Today we have ten 'Homes from Home' at major hospitals around the country where families can stay free of charge, for as long as they need whilst their child is undergoing treatment.

We support 4,000 families every year, and there is a growing demand for our 'Homes from Home' as children must increasingly travel long distances to get the specialist treatment they need.
www.sickchildrenstrust.org

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