Miracle Triplets Celebrate First Christmas

Tuesday 20 December, 2016

Looking at these little girls' smiling faces, you wouldn't believe that just days after being born their parents were told that they might not make it and to prepare for the worst.

Triplets Poppie, Mollie and Evelyn Park, from Whitehaven, were born at just 26 weeks weighing the combined weight of two bags of sugar. The girls suffered many complex issues due to their prematurity. Their lives so far have been very touch and go, with the girls spending 111 days in specialist hospital Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI), in Newcastle upon Tyne – over 100 miles away from home. Fortunately, Poppie and Mollie were both discharged from RVI at this point, however Evelyn was transferred to the family's local hospital in Whitehaven.

Parents Steven, 37, and Rachel, 39, were told to expect the worst as they waited by their babies' incubators. However, despite the odds that they faced, all three girls have made it home in time to spend their first ever Christmas together. **Sick Children's Trust Ambassador Steven says:**

"We left the RVI after 111 days and it was a great feeling to be one step closer to home, but we knew there was still a long road left to travel. All of the girls were admitted to our local hospital in Whitehaven and since then they have all had a few feeding issues but are now back home.

"When we look back on how poorly the girls were and where they are now – they've come so far and we're just full of pride. They do have blips, but nothing life threatening – and they're heading in the right direction, making lots of progress. They're happy, smiling and starting to show their emotions and exploring everything the world's got to offer.

"Our girls have been on a huge journey so far and because of that we're going to make sure their first Christmas will be extra special. We were so scared that they may not make it this far, and will therefore be really celebrating the festive season."

Throughout their treatment at RVI, Steven and Rachel were supported by The Sick Children's Trust with free 'Home from Home' accommodation. The charity, which runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country has two in Newcastle, one which supports families in RVI – Crawford House – and another which supports families in Freeman Hospital, Scott House. **Mum Rachel says:**

"The Sick Children's Trust has been an absolute lifeline on more than one occasion; without Crawford House we would have had the financial burden of hotel stays, or over a two hour journey home to Whitehaven each day. It is intense on the special care baby unit – we very much needed our own space just to relax and take care of ourselves, to have a soak in the bath or a refreshing shower to keep our strength up for each day. The Crawford House team were always there to talk to, and we'd share our ups and downs with them."

Crawford House, along with The Sick Children's Trust's other nine 'Homes from Home' across the country will be very busy this Christmas supporting families with seriously ill children in hospital. **Crawford House Manager, Gail Stonley, says:**

"We got to know Steven, Rachel and their gorgeous little girls very well before they left, it's hard to believe just how far they've come since May. We wish them a very special first Christmas.

"Although the charity provides free 'Home from Home' accommodation to families with seriously ill children, it costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. This Christmas we do expect to be really busy, so please do get in touch if you'd like to find out more."

For more information, visit: www.sickchildrenstrust.org

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