Mum of tiny girl to hold ‘Stay and Play’ event in Chelmsford to fundraise for charity

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For the second year in a row, the mum of a two year old girl who weighs as little as a baby half her age is raising money for The Sick Children’s Trust.

Philippa Rabbitts, 30, from Great Baddow in Chelmsford, is hosting a ‘Stay and Play’ charity event on 15 September to raise money for The Sick Children’s Trust. The charity supported Philippa and her partner, Matt Cole, 34, with free ‘Home from Home’ accommodation last year when their daughter, Bella, needed lifesaving surgery at Addenbrooke’s Hospital in Cambridge.

Little Bella was delivered by caesarean three weeks early and weighed just 4lbs 11oz. She was tube fed for the first 11 months of her life, but needed emergency surgery last year when she began to lose weight and was vomiting up to ten times a day. At 11 months old – and weighing only 11 pounds – doctors had to perform emergency surgery on her tiny body and place a tube directly into her intestines to ensure she was getting the nutrients she desperately needed. It was at this point that her parents were supported at The Sick Children’s Trust ‘Home from Home’ Acorn House which meant they were only ever moments from her side. **Bella’s Mum, Philippa says:**

“Bella turned two in June but as she still has difficulty feeding and gaining weight, she’s only the size of a ten month old baby and weighs just 19lbs. She is well in herself, but is still sick every morning and evening. Doctors don’t know the cause of her condition, but we’re just grateful that she is gradually gaining weight and making progress.

“Luckily Bella hasn’t had any lengthy hospital stays this year but there were times during 2017 when it felt like we were living at the hospital. If The Sick Children’s Trust hadn’t come to our aid, I don’t think we could’ve coped having to leave her every evening. That’s why I want to continue fundraising to help make sure that other families have a place to stay if their loved one is seriously ill in hospital. The charity were my lifesavers, and I want them to be lifesavers for other families too.”

Every year The Sick Children’s Trust provides much-needed emotional and practical support to around 4,000 families with seriously ill children in hospital. Although the accommodation is free of charge to families, the charity relies entirely on voluntary donations to run its houses. Philippa and her partner Matt are regular fundraisers who organised a psychic night last year which raised over £2,200 for The Sick Children’s Trust. **She continues:**

“The ‘Stay and Play’ event will take place at 14:30 –16:30 at Cheeky Monkeez Play Centre, South Woodham Ferrers, and the ticket price includes face painting, a Moo Music session, a lunch box and party bag. There will also be a tombola and character appearance so it’s set to be a really fun day! If you’re free, please come down and join Bella at her playdate to help fundraise for such a worthwhile cause.

“Bella is very well known locally because of her small size and huge head of hair, so when I shared the news about organising this event, everybody was really supportive. The Play Centre kindly offered me the space free of charge and MSC Roofing, Chelmsford, is sponsoring the event. The only thing left that I need to do is locate some tombola prizes so if any local business would like to get involved and donate prizes, I would be extremely appreciative!”

The Sick Children’s Trust runs ten ‘Homes from Home’ across the country, giving families with seriously ill children free accommodation just minutes from their child’s hospital bedside. It costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. **Acorn House Manager, Abi Abdel-aal, says:**

“We’re always grateful when families continue to work so hard to raise money for The Sick Children’s Trust. After the success of Philippa’s psychic event last year, I’m sure this will be a really fantastic day and can’t wait to hear about how much fun Bella had playing with her friends. Philippa and Matt’s continued support will make such a difference to the charity and will help us to support more families who need a ‘Home from Home’ when their child is seriously ill in hospital.”

Tickets to ‘Stay and Play’ are £10, to buy tickets or to donate prizes to the raffle, please call Philippa on 07969 544 939 or email at: philipparabbitts@gmail.com.

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