Mum raises over £4,200 to thank charity that kept her by son's hospital bedside

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A mum who nearly lost her baby son to a rare condition earlier this year has faced her fears to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust.

Gemma Smart, 31 from Littleport, bravely took on a skydive last month to say thank you to the charity which helped her and husband Rob when their baby boy, Drew, was fighting for his life in hospital.

At just a few days old, Drew underwent emergency surgery to fit a stoma and colostomy bag after being diagnosed with colonic atresia, where the colon hasn't formed correctly and which results in a very rare type of obstruction in the intestines.

Six months later, Drew was readmitted to Addenbrooke's Hospital for his stoma to be reversed. The operation seemed a success, but Drew soon took a turn for the worse becoming increasingly unwell as scar tissue had caused his bowel to become perforated. Over the next three weeks, little Drew endured three emergency operations to save his life. His parents watched on helplessly as their child endured operation after operation, still only a few months old. However, throughout this time they were just minutes from their baby's hospital bedside at Acorn House, free 'Home from Home' accommodation run by The Sick Children's Trust. **Gemma, who smashed her £575 fundraising goal, says:**

"The thought of doing a skydive was so scary and something I had never considered before, but thinking about the reason why I was doing it kept me calm. I was determined to complete the challenge for The Sick Children's Trust, for Drew and all the other children who need their parents by their hospital bedside when they are seriously ill.

"There aren't enough words to explain just how much having somewhere to stay so close to Drew helped me and Rob. Acorn House was such a support and the team really helped us through the hardest time of our lives by being there every step of the way.

"I think we would've become very sick ourselves without the help of Acorn House. When Drew was really ill and I was terrified for him, I could be by his side in minutes. It meant I could sit with him all night.

"I'd like to say a huge thank you to Abi and the team for giving us a 'Home from Home' and having the time to comfort us on those really hard days. I don't know how we would have coped otherwise"

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. The charity relies entirely on voluntary donations and it costs £30 to support a family for one night. **Acorn House Manager, Abi Abdel-aal, says:**

"Gemma was so brave taking on such a big challenge and it's absolutely incredible to hear the amount she's raised. It 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.

"We are all thrilled that Drew is now back at home with his mum and dad and feeling so much better. His family went through so much during that nine weeks Drew was in Addenbrooke's Hospital and I am just grateful that they felt supported by us during that time."

To read more about Drew's story, please visit: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Gemma-Smart4

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