Mum runs for charity that supported her following near-fatal house fire

Thursday 9 August, 2018

A Cumbrian woman whose children were seriously hurt in a house fire and required specialist hospital treatment over 90 miles from home is lacing up her trainers to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust, a charity that supported her during this time.

Jackie Kirkbride, 51 from Workington, experienced everyone's worst nightmare when her house set on fire as she slept. Her two youngest children, Michaela and Jamie Atkinson, then just nine and six years old, were trapped in their room as heat and smoke quickly filled the house. As they waited for help, the children opened the bedroom window in a desperate attempt to reach clean air. However, Jamie lost his balance and fell 15ft from the window. He was knocked unconscious and rolled into the fire. In a bid to rescue her brother from the flames Michaela courageously leapt out the window after him, breaking her ankle, and pulled her brother from the fire. Jamie, who suffered 27% burns, was rushed to Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary where he spent three months undergoing lifesaving treatment. During this time, Jackie, along with Michaela and eldest son Mark Farragher who had been on a school trip at the time of the fire, was given free 'Home from Home' accommodation at The Sick Children's Trust's Crawford House.

Crawford House is located within the grounds of Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary and is just a few minutes' walk from the children's wards. Jackie, whose parents also stayed at Crawford House while Jamie fought for survival, has now chosen to take part in the Great North Run to give back to the charity that was there for her throughout her time of need. **She says:**

"I can't describe how traumatic it was. I managed to get out of the house with minimal injuries, but my two youngest children were seriously injured. Jamie had severe burns and was rushed to Newcastle in an attempt to save his life. He spent three weeks fighting on the intensive care unit and a further three months undergoing numerous operations. Without Crawford House I honestly don't know how I would've coped. I nearly lost my children. The pain was unbearable. But being able to be by Jamie's hospital bedside because of the free accommodation that The Sick Children's Trust provided made a huge difference. At least I could be there to comfort him and we were able to stay together as a family.

"Crawford House really did become our 'Home from Home' for three months. We were all trying to stay positive for Jamie, but sometimes we just needed a few minutes off the ward to have a cup of tea and gather our thoughts. Crawford House has such a homely environment too, so much so, that when family came to visit we would take them over, sit them in the living room and chat like we would at home. Time out at Crawford House really meant a lot to us, it was so good for our wellbeing.

"Speaking to other families also staying at Crawford House was helpful. Although our experiences were not comparable, somehow you all unite because you're going through these traumatic times together."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country, supporting around 4,000 families every year. It costs the charity £30 to provide a family with accommodation for one night, and Jackie hopes to raise at least £1,000 so that Crawford House can be there for even more families by taking part in this year's Great North Run. **She continues:**

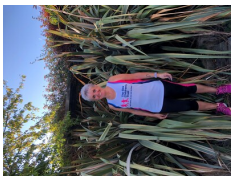
"I've always wanted to do something for Crawford House and The Sick Children's Trust, but over the last few years it's been an uphill battle. Jamie has had to go back to hospital a few times for skin graphs and I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder following the fire. However, in January, my friend encouraged me to join a running group. I didn't even run at school so initially wasn't very keen, but now I love it! It's been the best thing for my mental health and I have realised that it is the perfect way for me to raise money for Crawford House. Whether I'm running, walking or crawling, I will complete this challenge for The Sick Children's Trust."

Jackie will join over 50 runners as part of #TeamSCT to raise much needed funds to keep The Sick Children's Trust's 'Homes from Home' running. **Regional Fundraising Officer, Emily Corney, says:**

"We supported Jackie nineteen years ago and are overjoyed that she has decided to take on this huge challenge to thank us for being there for her during such an awful time in her life.

"As a charity, we rely entirely on voluntary donations so the money Jackie raises will make a huge

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difference to us and the families we support. We'd like to wish Jackie the best of luck."

To support Jackie, please visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/J-Kirkbride

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

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