Mum thanks charity for support whilst identical twins fought for life in different hospitals

Tuesday 4 December, 2018

A local mum has shared her sons' inspirational story to help raise awareness for The Sick Children's Trust's Christmas Appeal, as thanks for supporting her with free 'Home from Home' accommodation when one of her seriously ill twins required emergency lifesaving treatment miles from home.

Steph, 28, from Godmanchester, and her husband, Mark, were left terrified when their six week old identical twin boys, Reece and Luca, were diagnosed with bronchiolitis and admitted to Hinchingbrooke Hospital. Whilst doctors described Reece's condition as 'stable', an X-ray revealed that baby Luca's lungs were blocked and his oxygen saturation levels dangerously low. In a bid to save Luca's life the decision was made to transfer him to Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, for specialist treatment. On arrival, and with Luca unconscious and ventilated on the paediatric intensive care unit, Steph was offered a place to stay at Acorn House, free 'Home from Home' accommodation, run by The Sick Children's Trust. Mum Steph, who was supported by the charity for eleven days whilst her husband remained at Hinchingbrooke Hospital with baby Reece, says:

"At 2am shortly after getting to Addenbrooke's a nurse approached me to and told me about Acorn House. I had wrongly assumed that I would be able to stay with Luca on the ward, so it was a relief to hear I had been allocated a room, free of charge, by The Sick Children's Trust. I had never heard of such a charity.
"For the next eleven days Acorn House became my 'Home from Home'. It was an overwhelming time. Not only was I alone in Cambridge with an unconscious baby, but I was separated from my husband, older son, Jamie, and Reece, who was in a different hospital. At least Acorn House took some of the worries away and I could focus on Luca, never being more than two minutes away from him."

Baby Luca was ventilated for nine days and for a while his condition remained unchanged. Fortunately, by the ninth day, when he woke up and began to breath unaided, his lungs cleared and two days later he was transferred back to Hinchingbrooke Hospital making it back home a couple of days after that. Steph continues:

"Finally Luca was discharged and my family was reunited. I hadn't seen any of them for the duration of Luca's hospital admission. Mark had been very worried about me during this time, but felt reassured when I told him I was being looked after by the amazing house staff in Acorn House."

This Christmas, The Sick Children's Trust expects that every room across its ten 'Homes from Home' will be full with families who are caring for some of the UK's sickest children. The charity's Christmas appeal, My Christmas Wish, aims to raise £13,230, enough to run the charity's ten 'Homes from Home' over the Christmas period, providing essential emotional and practical support to families in need. Acorn House Manager, Abi Abdel-aal, says:

"It was a very uncertain time for Steph when she first arrived at Acorn House having been separated from Reece and her family. I am glad we were able to make her life a little easier and give her a 'Home from Home' so close to Luca. I can't imagine what it must have felt like to have her identical twin boys in two different hospitals, especially when Luca was so ill.

"The Sick Children's Trust supports around 4,000 families every year, and we expect all our 'Homes from Home' to be full over the Christmas period so it really helps to raise awareness of the work that we do when families, like Luca's, are happy to share their experiences."

Your donation will keep a family with a seriously ill child together this Christmas.

To donate visit:

- The Sick Children's Trust's Christmas Wish JustGiving page: https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/mychristmaswish
- By calling the team on 020 7638 4066

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