Mum Treks for Charity That Gave Her a 'Home from Home' for 185 Days

Tuesday 21 June, 2016

The mum of premature twin girls, who've battled their way to their first birthday, will be trekking ten miles with friends to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust.

Serena Hanks, 41 from Linton, has organised 'Millie and Lottie's Journey Home' - a sponsored walk from The Rosie Hospital, Cambridge, to their home in Linton. The walk, which represents the twins' first few months of life, is to thank The Sick Children's Trust for giving the parents a 'Home from Home' while the girls underwent life-saving treatment in hospital.

Last year, Serena and husband Nev welcomed Millie and Lottie into the world, but the girls were seriously ill after arriving at just 25 weeks - with a combined weight of just 3lbs. For 120 days, both girls fought numerous conditions which came with their prematurity, from respiratory distress to heart defects. However, while Lottie got stronger, Millie became weaker after contracting the life-threatening bowel condition necrotizing enterocolitis, and their parents were told she had just 12 hours to live. Millie underwent extensive surgery, and thankfully started a long, bumpy, recovery process. While Lottie was allowed home after 120 days, it took 185 days for her sister Millie to leave the hospital.

During this time, the family were supported at Chestnut House, a 'Home from Home' run by The Sick Children's Trust. Chestnut House is located just a lift ride away from the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), and supports parents with free accommodation while their baby is seriously ill in hospital. **Mum Serena, who will be pounding the pavements on Sunday 26 June, says:**

"The Sick Children's Trust came to our rescue, offering us accommodation in its 'Home from Home' Chestnut House. It was close by the girls so that we could be with them in a matter of minutes. It was our saviour and offered us a little respite from the bleeping machines and intense medical and clinical environment of NICU. It also gave us the help and support we needed during what was an extremely emotional and distressing time.

"We could spend precious time with both Millie and Lottie as we didn't have to factor in any travelling to and from the hospital. We could go and see them first thing in the morning as well as enjoy late night cuddles without the daytime hustle and bustle when visitors and other parents would be about.

"Millie and Lottie have both gone from strength to strength since they've been home. They celebrated their first birthday on Wednesday 15 June and we would like to use this important time to give thanks to The Sick Children's Trust. We've planned a charity walk on Sunday 26 June to raise invaluable funds for this very special charity which helped and supported us through a very difficult time - and which continues to help and support families up and down the country."

Chestnut House is one of ten 'Homes from Home' run by The Sick Children's Trust. The charity supports around 4,000 families a year with free accommodation so that they can stay close to their seriously ill child. **Chestnut House Manager Abi Abdel-aal says:**

"It's so lovely to hear how grateful Serena and Nev are for Chestnut House's support. Our 'Homes from Home' are invaluable to families in need, which was especially for the Hanks family when Millie was critically ill and Lottie was getting ready to leave The Rosie. Chestnut House meant that Serena and Nev could be there for both girls, and stay together as a family. That's what our 'Homes from Home' are all about, keeping families together.

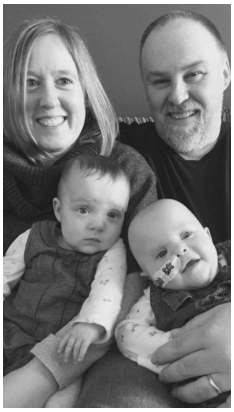
"Chestnut House is run entirely on voluntary donations and on average it costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. 'Millie and Lottie's Journey Home' is a wonderful idea and we're delighted they have decided to do this for us. It will go a long way in helping many more families."

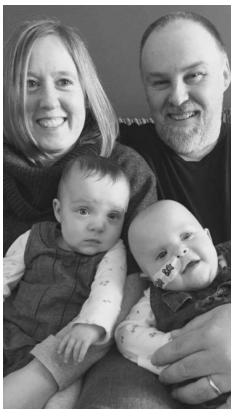
For further information on the Hanks twins or to support Serena's fundraising, please visit: http://bit.ly/22Md4Z3

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