Mums complete neon Glow In The Park 5km run to say thank you to charity

Thursday 26 October, 2017

Two mums, who bonded and became friends when their sons were born prematurely, have raised £490 for The Sick Children's Trust as thanks for supporting them in its 'Home from Home' Chestnut House. They were both supported by The Sick Children's Trust after the birth of their seriously premature sons, and completed the ultimate night time neon run on 30 September to raise money and awareness for the charity.

Helen Ledster, 38, from Hoddesdon in Hertfordshire, gave birth to Flynn at just 27 weeks on 2 May 2016 at The Rosie Hospital in Cambridge. He was immediately ventilated and transferred to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and over the next 16 weeks Helen and her husband Daniel watched their baby son fight for his life in hospital. Whilst Flynn was undergoing treatment, Helen and her family were supported by The Sick Children's Trust, which provided them with free 'Home from Home' accommodation, as well as emotional support. They were given a room at Chestnut House, just minutes from Flynn's hospital bedside.

A month into their stay at Chestnut House, Helen met new mum Michala, 35, from Colchester. Michala's family had also been given free accommodation by The Sick Children's Trust after she gave birth to her baby Albie at just 26 weeks. Albie was born on 31 May 2016 at Colchester Hospital, weighing a tiny 2lb 1oz and required an immediate emergency transfer to The Rosie Hospital in Cambridge. **Mum Michala, who stayed at Chestnut House for nine weeks, says:**

"Having the support of The Sick Children's Trust helped us enormously when coping with the uncertainty after Albie was born. When the doctor told us that he had chronic lung disease due to being born prematurely, we were devastated. We needed to know that our baby would pull through, but the doctor couldn't tell us that he would. At the worst time of our lives we found such solace and comfort at Chestnut House, especially meeting other parents with seriously ill babies.

"Helen and I became friends immediately. We were both going through a mother's worst nightmare and her baby, Flynn, was just a few weeks older than Albie. Sharing the experience together helped us both to cope with the nightmare we were experiencing. We became firm friends and ever since we were able to take our boys home we have said we wanted to fundraise for The Sick Children's Trust – the charity that helped us cope physically, emotionally and financially.

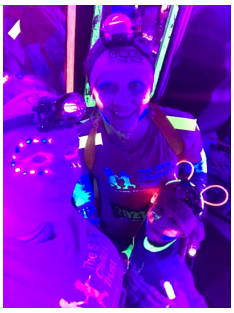
"My partner Tyler and I stayed in Cambridge for nine weeks before Albie was weaned down on his oxygen and could be transferred back to Colchester. Leaving Chestnut House was a big step for us, we were thrilled to be going home, but sad to leave the fantastic team and lifelong friends we had made. We had a mixture of emotions leaving Chestnut House, as while we were told that Albie was doing really well, Helen was still in hospital waiting for Flynn to get better and that was quite hard to know. But now, thankfully both boys are doing really well and we just want to help the charity so that families like ours can be supported during their darkest times."

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. **Mum, Helen, whose family were supported by The Sick Children's Trust for 16 weeks after the birth of Flynn adds:**

"Michala and I decided to take on the Glow in the Park run because we wanted to do something together to show how grateful we are for the support we received after the birth of our sons, but also as a symbol of our friendship. My son Bradley also did the run with us, which made it even more fun! We all really enjoyed it and reached our fundraising targets, but it was a pretty messy evening – at one point the foam was deeper than Bradley so I had to carry him through! I think the UV paint blast zone was his favourite part of the course. It was a lot of fun but it was still challenging as neither Michala nor I are natural runners! We are so pleased to have raised this money for The Sick Children's Trust and hopefully can do more joint challenges in the future.

"The Sick Children's Trust is an amazing charity. Chestnut House enabled us to be together as a family at weekends and meant I could be with Flynn during the week. It is called a 'Home from Home' and that is exactly what it is. I will always be grateful that I didn't have the additional stress of being away from Flynn and travelling every single day when he was so poorly. Having a homely place for Bradley who was then six was so important. Bradley looked forward to coming to see Mummy and Flynn and felt like it was

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a mini holiday for him.

“Meeting Michala after Albie was transferred to The Rosie Hospital was like going back in time a month to when Flynn had been born. We were able to support each other, and in the evenings when we were sick with worry we distracted each other and kept our minds from thinking the worst possible thoughts.”

The Sick Children’s Trust relies entirely on voluntary donations and it costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night **Chestnut House Manager, Abi Abdel-aal, says:**

“It is fantastic when parents staying with us become friends and stay in touch after meeting at Chestnut House. The support parents can offer each other during such challenging times is invaluable. We are delighted to hear that Helen and Michala have been fundraising together for us and the photos of the two of them with Bradley covered in neon paint after the run are brilliant. It certainly looked like a lot of fun!

“I am so pleased that both Flynn and Albie are now home and doing well. It is such a worrying time for parents when their babies are born so premature. And as a charity, we try to alleviate some of the worry and stresses families experience by giving them a ‘Home from Home’ where they can eat, get some rest and have a shoulder to cry on away from the hospital environment.

“As a charity we rely on voluntary donations so we can continue to run our ten ‘Homes from Home’ across the country, supporting families with seriously ill children in hospital. The money that these two wonderful mummies have raised will make a huge difference to families who need our support in the future.”

To get behind The Sick Children’s Trust and sponsor Helen and Michala visit their Just Giving sites https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/helen-ledster and https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/michala-young

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

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