Mum's super Sahara trek in support of The Sick Children's Trust

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A Shropshire mum is taking on an excruciating trek across the Sahara desert to raise vital funds for The Sick Children's Trust, the charity that gave her a place to stay when her son was born 16 weeks prematurely weighing just 650g.

Mikaela Cox unexpectedly went into labour giving birth to Reggie prematurely at the Royal London Hospital. Reggie was immediately taken away to be monitored, wrapped in a plastic bag to keep him warm and kept in a ventilator while doctors worked to stabilise him.

Mikaela and her partner Dave didn't get to see Reggie until nine hours later and even then they couldn't touch him for another 30 days. The family were only living a short distance from the hospital at the time, but when Reggie took a turn for the worse they couldn't bear being away from his side. Thanks to The Sick Children's Trust, which provides families with a free place to stay just minutes away from the hospital, they were always close to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit where Reggie was being treated. **Mikaela, a nurse at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH), said:**

"For the first three months Reggie was doing well and putting on weight but one day, out of nowhere, we received a call to say he'd took a turn for the worse. We nearly lost him. Everything changed from that moment, we realised that being at home was too far when he was so sick, it was so much more worrying and difficult.

"We were only living a few tube stops away from the Royal London Hospital when Reggie was born and for the first few months we just travelled to and from home, but when Reggie became so poorly we couldn't face being away from him for any length of time. Stevenson House made sure we were just a five minute walk away.

"Being a nurse at GOSH at the time I knew a bit about what to expect, but it was extremely hard for my partner Dave. I had worked with The Sick Children's Trust before, placing families in their other 'Homes from Home' near to GOSH and it was a great relief to find out about Stevenson House and be told we could stay there. This completely changed everything as we had a place to stay so close to the hospital where we could cook meals, clean Reggie's clothes and spend time with our family away from the hospital.

"Stevenson House was a massive physical and mental benefit. It really was a home for us that we were instantly welcomed into by the other people staying there who were going through the same thing as us. It's so difficult being away from your child but having the support from those other families was helped. It was its own little world that took everything off our plate so that we could just focus on Reggie."

To thank the charity for its support Mikaela is now taking on a gruelling 100km trek across the Sahara desert all to raise vital funds so that they charity can continue supporting families with seriously ill children in hospital. **Mikaela continued:**

"I really wanted to push myself and raise as much money as possible for The Sick Children's Trust. I never thought that I would need to use the charity's 'Homes from Home' but Stevenson House was so important to us during such a difficult time that I want to give that help to more families. It will be a tough challenge, but I'm doing it for Reggie."

The Sick Children's Trust relies entirely on voluntary donations to give families a place to stay in one of its ten 'Homes from Home' across the country. **Charlotte Coldrey, Community Fundraising Officer at The Sick Children's Trust, said:**

"This is an incredible challenge that Mikaela is taking on to raise money so that we can support more families like hers. As a charity, we appreciate every single donation that we receive whether that's from a huge challenge like Mikala's, a virtual bake sale or pub quiz. It goes towards keeping families just minutes for their child's hospital bedside. We wish Mikaela all the best with the trek."

More information about Mikaela's Sahara Trek can be found on her Just Giving page https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/reggies-journey

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