Parents Of Teenager Who Survived Two Cardiac Arrests Asks Community To Support The Sick Children's Trust

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The parents of a teenager who survived two cardiac arrests are asking the community to help The Sick Children's Trust raise over £65,000 by joining in the charity's annual Big Chocolate Tea fundraising campaign.

Lesley and Mark Edwards, from Newcastle upon Tyne, are thanking The Sick Children's Trust for giving them free 'Home from Home' accommodation when their son was fighting for his life in Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI).

Mark Jnr, 15, went into cardiac arrest after having an allergic reaction to an anaesthetic. The Gosforth Academy pupil, who was born with a tracheo-oesophageal fistula (TOF) attends the RVI for regular check-ups. However, his last appointment for an endoscopy two weeks ago left him fighting for his life on the paediatric intensive care unit (PICU).

During this time, his Mum Lesley, was able to stay just minutes from his hospital bedside at The Sick Children's Trust's 'Home from Home' Crawford House. Crawford House, along with the charity's nine other 'Homes from Home', gives families with a seriously ill child in hospital a free place to stay, close to their loved ones.

The Sick Children's Trust relies entirely on voluntary donations and Big Chocolate Tea is the charity's biggest annual fundraiser. It runs from Friday 21 April – Monday 1 May to raise money to support families like Mark's with free 'Home from Home' accommodation. **Residential Care Officer Lesley, 56, is encouraging the community to take part to raise money for the charity. She says:**

"We're very grateful for the support we received from Crawford House, it was there for us – a warm, homely place to stay just minutes from where our son was when he was fighting for his life.

"When I saw the consultant with a group of doctors walk out the room towards me, I knew something was wrong, but I had no idea how serious it was. Deep down, I always knew that Mark would pull through but hearing that your son nearly died is very traumatic. So, having a place like Crawford House where you can talk to a team of people who will give you the emotional support you need is simply amazing.

"What's more is that I was just a few minutes away from Mark's hospital bedside, so it meant as soon as I woke up in the morning I could be there for him, even if it was 4am. And I could call any time I wanted because in my room there was a direct telephone line straight to the ward."

After five days of intensive specialist treatment, Mark was discharged from the RVI – just in time to celebrate his 15th birthday at home with his twin Joshua. **Mark's dad, Rev. Mark Edwards, 55, adds:**

"We're so thankful to have Mark Jnr back at home. He's recovering well and has no memory of what happened to him. But for us it's hard to put the memory of his lifeless body out of our minds. Seeing my boy in PICU on a ventilator surrounded by all the medical equipment was heart-breaking. I had given him a hug just a few hours before and there I was watching him fight for every breath on a life-support machine.

"To be told that he had suffered not one, but two cardiac arrests was difficult to hear. As well as being a clergyman, I am also a volunteer medic with the North East Ambulance service so I know just how brutal CPR can be and the effects of a cardiac arrest. To think that my boy had to go through this was distressing. I held on to my faith but the tears flowed as I prayed for my son.

"Thankfully, we were able to be by our son's side as he bravely fought because of The Sick Children's Trust. Crawford House was there for us in our time of need, and we want to be sure that The Sick Children's Trust can be there for any other family who may be going through something similar. We are people of faith and give thanks for answered prayers as well as the skills of the medical profession. We hope others will get behind The Sick Children's Trust's Big Chocolate Tea so it can be there for others too."

The Sick Children's Trust runs free 'Home from Home' accommodation across the UK, supporting families with seriously ill children in hospital. While accommodation is provided free, it costs the charity

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£30 to support a family for one night. Last year, Big Chocolate Tea raised £60,000 which gave 2,000 families free ‘Home from Home’ accommodation, keeping them together when it matters most. The Sick Children’s Trust hopes this year’s campaign will be an even greater success. **Assistant House Manager, Linsey Brough, says:**

“We’re so pleased that we could be there for Mark’s family – and we were overjoyed when Lesley told us that they could take him home just days later.

“Lesley and Mark’s support means so much to us, and if anyone would like to help other families like theirs stay close to their seriously ill child please join in with Big Chocolate Tea. It’s a fun and easy way to raise money to give a family a ‘Home from Home’ when they need it the most.”

Supporters can choose to take part in Big Chocolate Tea at any point during the year and will receive a free fundraising pack full of goodies to hold the perfect event. **Dad Mark adds:**

“I was comforted knowing that Lesley was so close to Mark staying in Crawford House. I was at home comforting his twin brother, trying to continue with my parish responsibilities but was in constant communication with Lesley who I knew was able to return to Crawford House a place where she could sleep, freshen up, pray, reflect and cry and still be close to Mark Jnr.

“We didn't know about The Sick Children’s Trust until we needed them. It was there to provide a space we so badly needed at one of the most challenging and difficult times in our life. We cannot thank them enough and we were only too happy to make our own contribution to the charity in grateful thanks to them.”

For more information on The Sick Children’s Trust and to find out more about Big Chocolate Tea, please visit: http://www.sickchildrenstrust.org/bigchoctea.

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