Southsea family pledge support to charity as thanks for giving them a 'Home from Home' throughout daughter's battle with eye cancer

Tuesday 5 December, 2017

The Lloyd family from Southsea are supporting The Sick Children's Trust's first ever Christmas appeal - 'All I want for Christmas' which aims to raise £13,140, enough to run its ten ‘Homes from Home’ during the festive period, providing essential emotional and practical support to families in need. Each house is located at a leading specialist children’s hospital, just a few minutes away from the paediatric intensive care wards, so parents can create magical memories with their seriously ill child. Mum Marie Lloyd tells their story:

"My daughter Daisy is the kindest and loveliest girl. There isn't one bad bone in her body.

"Daisy was born with bilateral retinoblastoma – a cancer which had developed in the retina of both her eyes, but she wasn't diagnosed until she was 12 months old. We honestly had no idea she had it, because she was walking and crawling everywhere, even though she actually had little sight because her eyes were riddled with tumours.

"Initially we were treated at Birmingham Children’s Hospital, where Daisy underwent nine months of chemotherapy. But sadly, it wasn’t enough and at 15 months old, she had to have an eye removed. But despite this preventative measure, it didn’t mean that cancer was gone – or would stop spreading. Six weeks later, as Daisy went for another eye check it revealed that more tumours had developed. At that point we were transferred to The Royal London Children’s Hospital, where Daisy was given radiation to try and save her other eye. But the tumours came back.

"By the time Daisy was three years old, we were told there wasn’t any other option but to remove the other eye. We heard of some pioneering treatment available in Canada and within a day we were on a plane to Toronto where we lived for 18 months.

"Even though the treatment seemed to work, sadly it didn't in the long run. And by five years old Daisy had her second eye removed.

"For the last 15 years, Daisy has been under the care at our local hospital but also The Royal London Hospital. Some of our appointments have been as early as 6am, but we’ve never had to worry about making them on time because we were introduced to The Sick Children’s Trust, that offered us a ‘Home from Home’ at its Stevenson House.

"Stevenson House is just a few minutes’ walk from the hospital, and has meant that we could travel to London from our home in Southsea the night before Daisy’s appointments. It really has helped take the pressure off on more than one occasion and has meant that Daisy and I could spend some time together, at a place where we could cook and have a good night’s sleep before her clinics.

"In places like The Sick Children's Trust, you end up making friends for life because you are going through similar situations. You know their children and their stories - and they almost become family. The work The Sick Children's Trust does is so important and vital. And we hope the charity helps many more families likes ours to make some of the hardest situations in life a little bit easier.

"Every year, Daisy has had something happen. This year she was at GOSH because she had a tumour in her jawbone and had to have it removed and her jaw reconstructed. But despite all she's been through, Daisy is so happy. She's one of four and loves life. She has passed her GCSEs and continues to excel in art. She loves skiing and horse riding and lives life to the full.

"Daisy may still have lots more to overcome, but we know she can."

The Sick Children’s Trust is a national charity which supports around 4,000 families every year. The charity relies entirely on voluntary donations to keep its ten ‘Homes from Home’ running, providing vital support to families with children undergoing lifesaving treatment in hospital. This Christmas it expects that every room in every house will be full with families, caring for some of the UK’s sickest children.

Jane Featherstone, CEO at The Sick Children’s Trust says: “No child should wake up on Christmas

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morning without their family around them. But this Christmas, many families with a critically ill child in a specialist hospital will face a long journey to be at their child's side.

"A donation of £30 will give a family a place to stay in one of our 'Homes from Home', just moments from their sick child. It costs The Sick Children's Trust £13,140 to run our ten 'Homes from Home' across the country over the Christmas period, keeping families together at one of the most important times of the year. Your donation can make this possible."

To watch the Christmas appeal film, visit: https://youtu.be/qpgKkZuPWmc.

For more information on The Sick Children's Trust and for other ways to donate, please visit http://www.sickchildrenstrust.org/Donate/.

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