Teenager Backs Charity Campaign As Thanks For Keeping Parents By His Side

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A Hartlepool teenager is asking people from the North East to back The Sick Children's Trust's Big Chocolate Tea campaign to help the charity raise vital funds after it supported his parents when he was seriously ill in hospital.

Last April, Luke Allison, 13, was rushed from North Tees Hospital to Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI) after a scan revealed he had an abscess on his brain following a severe case of sinusitis. Luke underwent two major surgeries at the specialist hospital, where he was treated for four weeks. During this time Luke's parents, Sue and Anthony, were supported with free 'Home from Home' accommodation at Crawford House, just minutes away from their son's hospital bedside.

The Sick Children's Trust, which runs Crawford House and nine other 'Homes from Home' across the country, supports families with seriously ill children in hospital. While accommodation is provided free to families, it costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night**. Luke, who attends High Tunstall College of Science, has already raised £400 for the charity and is hoping others will join him in supporting the charity's Big Chocolate Tea. He says:**

"I don't remember a lot about being in hospital, but I do remember feeling frightened and not wanting my Mum and Dad to leave me. The paediatric intensive care unit can be a scary place, especially when you can't see anything. You don't realise how scary it is not being able to see and it made me feel a lot better to know that Mum and Dad were always with me, or just a couple of minutes away at Crawford House.

"If it wasn't for Crawford House I wouldn't have had my Mum and Dad with me when I was in hospital and I would've been alone. And I don't think any other child in hospital should have to experience things all by themselves because it's really frightening. If more people join in with the charity's Big Chocolate Tea event, then we can make sure Crawford House is there for more families, so every child has their parents close by."

Last year, Big Chocolate Tea raised £60,000 which gave 2,000 families free 'Home from Home' accommodation, keeping them together with their seriously ill child when it mattered most. The Sick Children's Trust hopes this year's campaign will be an even greater success. **Crawford Assistant House Manager, Linsey Brough, says:**

"We are completely inspired by Luke and his determination to fundraise for The Sick Children's Trust and to get people involved in Big Chocolate Tea.

"Big Chocolate Tea is our biggest annual fundraising campaign and such a lot of fun. By getting involved with Big Chocolate Tea and raising at least £30, you could support a family for one night at a 'Home from Home'."

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. **Luke's Mum, Sue, adds:**

"We honestly don't know how we would have coped without Crawford House – they really looked after all of us. All the staff were lovely to our family, always making an effort to say 'hello' and asking about Luke's progress. We knew that they were there if we needed them.

"I truly believe knowing we were so close helped Luke to recover faster. We will always be grateful to The Sick Children's Trust."

For further information on Big Chocolate Tea and to request your free fundraising pack, please visit: http://www.sickchildrenstrust.org/bigchoctea.

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