Virtual Race Club helps ease reality of having a seriously ill child in hospital through fundraising endurance race

Friday 30 April, 2021

A team of enthusiastic sim racers from across the world turned their gaming into giving by hosting a two and a half hour endurance race which raised £1,000 for The Sick Children's Trust.

Virtual Racers Club (VRC), an online community for fans of the Gran Turismo simulation racing game, organised the virtual race around the legendary Bathurst race track for The Sick Children's Trust after hearing how the charity had helped one of its members. Matt Sykes, from Wickford, was given a place to stay by the charity at its 'Homes from Home' Rainbow and Guilford Street Houses in London when his son, Joshua, spent six months undergoing treatment at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH).

Participants were asked to donate £10 to enter and, along with the generosity of other members, their families and friends, £1,000 was raised which will go towards giving families with a seriously ill child in hospital a warm and comfortable place to stay in one of its ten 'Homes from Home'. **VRC administrator, Ian Thomson, from Hemel Hampstead, said:**

"With most of us being fathers we could empathise with Matt*'s story and it was a very easy decision that we would use our first ever charity race to show support for a great cause that most of us could connect with on an emotional level.*

"As a father of two, having either one of my children in hospital for any reason is one of my worst nightmares, let alone if they were on the other side of the country alone. The Sick Children's Trust provides a service that helps keep families as close as possible through times when there would be no other support for them. I am sure that keeping parents nearby to a hospital where their child is receiving treatment will make a huge difference to them, their mental health and wellbeing.

"The Bathurst race was a resounding success and it's thanks to our wonderful competitors, our community, their friends, families and colleagues that we doubled our initial target and will look at doing more events like this in the future."

Matt who was pipped to the post and came second in the race added: "From a personal perspective it cannot be overstated how much impact The Sick Children's Trust had on us during our sons six month stay at GOSH. Allowing us to be within a few minutes' walk of the ward, but also providing a place of respite and community with other families going through the same thing literally kept our family together. Every pound raised goes directly to providing some stability for families at the time when its needed most."

The Sick Children's Trust relies entirely on voluntary donation to keep its ten 'Homes from Home' running. **Charlotte Coldrey, Community Fundraising Officer at The Sick Children's Trust, said:**

"Due to the pandemic and cancelled fundraising events throughout 2020 we saw a drop in income which is why it is so incredible and fantastic that VRC decided to host a race for us. They have shown that you can still make a huge difference to others from the sofa in your living room, and have fun doing so. It's a brilliant and creative idea, and we can't thank everyone at VRC enough for their support."

For further information about The Sick Children's Trust, please visit sickchildrenstrust.org

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