

New recruit for Emily's Big Walk



A little girl who is recovering from cancer is taking part in Emily's Big Walk to raise vital funds for the Sick Kids Friends Foundation (SKFF).

Victoria Stewart, aged five, will be taking part in the walk alongside her mum, Vera, to raise awareness of childhood cancer and help collect money to donate to future research and improving medical equipment.

When she was two and a half, Victoria, from Haddington was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia (ALL) – which is a form of leukaemia, or cancer of the white blood cells characterised by excess lymphoblasts. After 27 months of intensive chemotherapy treatment, blood transfusions and numerous courses of steroids, the five-year old is now in remission.

Charity worker Vera, 33, said:- “Watching Victoria go through cancer and come out the other side is an experience that has made me want to campaign to raise funds for the Sick Kids Friends Foundation. We are looking forward to taking part in the walk together and joining the group on the day.”

The walk is named after Emily Bailes, who was diagnosed with cancer at the age of five lost her battle with the disease in March 2008, aged nine.

The Emily's Big Walk initiative is taking place throughout the UK with legs in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow.

Vera continued:- “We can't encourage people enough to take part in such a worthwhile fundraising event in the memory of a

brave little girl who unfortunately lost her battle with cancer at such a young age.”

Emily’s family set up the Emily Bailes Fund to raise money for The Children’s Cancer and Leukaemia Group (CCLG) on July 4, 2008 – which would have been Emily’s 10th birthday.

Funds collected from the Edinburgh walk will be split between SKFF and CCLG and will go towards supporting children with cancer at Edinburgh’s Royal Hospital for Sick Children.

Vera added: “When Victoria was receiving treatment at the hospital, we were often faced with a sizable wait between appointments. We found the Sick Kids Friends Foundation Drop In Centre to be an invaluable resource. The adults could go in, have a sit down with a cup of tea and a chat and the kids were entertained with arts and crafts.”

The Drop-In Centre, which is the only one of its kind in the UK, opened six years ago and provides a facility for sick children and their families to go outwith the hospital. With four members of staff and 11 volunteers, the centre is able to provide visitors with support and advice as well as offering a wide range of activities for the children including arts and crafts, a Wii, computers, board games and films.

The Centre is funded entirely by SKFF, which donates £150,000 a year to run it.

Maureen Harrison, Chief Executive of the Sick Kids Friends Foundation, said: “I am delighted to announce Emily’s Big Walk will be taking place at the Meadows to raise money and awareness for children’s cancer.

“I would encourage people to attend this event to help us remember Emily, a truly inspiring little girl with a big heart – and help us improve services in our children’s hospital for other children like Victoria who have been going through this terrible illness. Our plan is to use the funds raised by the

walk to improve the treatment room where children receive chemotherapy and other treatments. We want to make it a better environment for them and also to provide some distraction equipment – hopefully a 3D television. All this will help to make treatment more bearable for these children who have to endure many many appointments during their illness. Join us and help make Sick Kids better.'

Emily's Big Walk will take place at the Meadows in Edinburgh on Tuesday 4 September 2012 at 6pm. Anyone wishing to take part should visit www.emilysbigwalk.org.uk or contact Vicki Watson at the Sick Kids Friends Foundation on 0131 668 4949.