

Edinburgh teenager writes book about breast cancer



A very special book was launched yesterday at The Scottish Story Telling Centre in the High Street. Written by 13 year old Emma Sutherland from Fairmilehead after her mother Rosie was diagnosed with the illness last year, 'Eek!! My Mummy has Breast Cancer' is being distributed to every Maggie's Centre in the UK, and is also available at all 28 Edinburgh libraries.

The book tells of Emma's struggle to deal with her mum's breast cancer diagnosis, and how she coped and managed her feelings, along with many facts about the disease, in a language that young people can understand.

The Boroughmuir High School pupil decided to write 'Eek', after trying to find a book about breast cancer to help her understand what was going on but could only find books for small children or adult material which she couldn't understand.

Emma and her younger sister Kate are no strangers to helping others and have been fundraising for the special care babies unit at Edinburgh's Royal Infirmary for several years. She was born prematurely, weighing only 3lb 7oz and spent the first three weeks of her life in the unit.

When she discovered this fact Emma decided that she wanted to thank the Simpson's staff she started raising money through cake bakes and "yard sales" where Kate painted nails for cash.

Yesterday's event was hosted by Grant Stott who is a family friend, and he told the specially invited audience:- " It's been a remarkable couple of years for the family and for Emma

to take what was obviously a very difficult time with Rosie's illness, and turn it into such a monumental and positive thing is inspirational. There is nothing like this in the UK. The book is at all Maggie's Centres across the UK and the next challenge is to get it into all doctors' surgeries as well.

"They say that everyone has a book in them but to get that done by the time you are 13 is quite remarkable and I have to say I am very impressed by what she has managed to achieve.

Grant then introduced an understandably emotional mum Rosie and the pair read an extract from the book:- "Hi, my name is Emma. I am now thirteen, but when I was twelve, my mum told my little sister and I that she had breast cancer. Do you know how many websites come up when you Google 'breast cancer'? It's quite scary. So are all the big words. There were no publications for teenagers to help them understand what's happening to their mummy. I struggled to come to terms with what was happening around me and had nowhere to turn. After an hour long visit to Maggie's Centre, Edinburgh, I decided to write my own book. Knowledge is power and with power comes happiness. I hope to help other teenagers so they don't suffer like me. Help me make a difference."

Emma then took to the stage and along with her mum read another passage: "Hindsight is a wonderful thing and I can see now how uneducated I was about cancer but who reads about it when it's not part of your life? Any questions? My mum asked Kate and I sat still throughout, not really understanding what had just been said. She answered:- 'Yes can I go back to the computer now?' This made me giggle inside but not enough to show on my face. I just asked to go to my room and ran upstairs as quickly as I could, buried my face in the pillow and cried like I had never cried before. I phoned my friend. My mum had already told my friends mum a few hours earlier as

she knew I would want to speak to Jenny.

“We talked on the phone for an hour, well I just sobbed. After I put the phone down, my mum came into my room. She could see that my mascara was all over my bed sheets not to mention my face.

“We hugged and cried together as I wondered if she was going to be OK. My mum is my rock. She guides me, keeps me safe, gives me pocket money and makes me eat green beans. She is such a loving, caring fun mum; I just can’t begin to imagine my life without her.”



By this stage there was not a dry eye in the building, but if having a book launch was not enough drama for the day, Emma then received some exciting news from charity worker John McAuley from Fighting Against Cancer Edinburgh (FACE)

John explained:- “For the last 20 years we have taken boys and girls on day trips to Lapland to see Santa Claus. When I saw the article I got in touch with Rosie, so on the 15 December Emma will fly with us to Lapland in Finland along with children who have had cancer and children who have sadly lost parents for very special day.”

Breast Surgeon Mike Dixon who treated Rosie at the Western General Hospital was also at the event and told the Edinburgh Reporter: “Emma’s book is inspirational. It’s amazing that someone her age was able to produce such a fantastic book. I have written 28 books but I couldn’t have produced one as good at her age, or even now. It is a fantastic effort and she said that she did it to make a difference and she certainly has done that.”

Rosie told The Edinburgh Reporter: -“Words can’t describe how proud I am. Emma wants to make a difference and has been fundraising since the age of five, along with her younger

sister Kate. She was a special care baby and used to do cake and bake sales to raise money for that charity. When she wrote the book, she never once asked what was in it for her.

“This is a big day for Emma and the book but for me it’s about closure. It’s now over and we can move on. I know there will be other books because Emma is tenacious and determined and does want to make a difference, that’s her line, and she has done so already.

“In the car I could feel myself going all funny and I thought ‘Is it nerves?’ but it’s not, it’s emotion because this is the product of something so terrible but so amazing at the same time, it’s a bitter sweet thing, but the girl did good!

“You can access Edinburgh Libraries online and I went onto the computer and searched for Emma’s book and a few libraries had it saying ‘out due back’ and I felt proud because I thought it’s working, that’s it. You don’t have to buy it, it’s there for free. It’s quite nice sitting at night thinking we are helping someone right now. It’s a real feel-good thing.”

Emma said:- “I want to make a difference and help other teenagers. I know there is a demand for it because my Eek Facebook page received over 1200 likes in the first two weeks. I have raised enough money to buy 1000 books so far but we need more as I would like to donate 100 books to each of the 16 Maggie’s Centres in the UK. I visited Maggie’s Edinburgh where the staff supported me while my mummy underwent breast cancer treatment.”

This remarkable youngster hasn’t finished there and she plans to write similar books such as ‘Eek!! My daddy has prostate cancer’ and ‘Eek what’s leukaemia?’

The book costs £7 with all proceeds going to the Maggie’s Centre. To find out more visit <http://www.eekmymummy.co.uk/>

