

Edinburgh College students offer free photo sessions



In a touching project, two Edinburgh College photography students have given young children affected by cancer a reason to smile by offering them and their families free photo shoots to provide lasting memories.

BA Professional Photography students Derek Anderson and David Hamilton-Smith have been taking photos of families for the Edinburgh charity CCLASP (Children with Cancer and Leukaemia, Advice and Support for Parents). The pair have given up their time to do the photos for free, and got involved with the charity through Derek's family friend and CCLASP founder Valerie Simpson.

Derek and David offered to take pictures for the families that CCLASP support as a way of helping the charity while furthering photography skills, and the families have found the photos a great support through difficult times.

Among the people helped was Claire Tasker and her family from Kirkcaldy in Fife.

Claire's daughter Jessica was diagnosed with Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL) when she was two. Claire says that CCLASP was a "godsend" during Jessica's treatment. Whilst Jessica, now six, has been in remission for the last two years, in February of this year, Claire's mum Kay was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer.

With the family knowing that her mum didn't have long after her diagnosis, Claire called on Derek and David to bring the family together for a photo shoot they would always remember. Claire says that David and Derek were extremely good at making

everyone feel relaxed and the pictures now decorate her house and have been given out as gifts to provide lasting memories of her mum, who passed away in April at the age of 53.

Claire said: "It's the last photos that we got of us all as a family. I was pregnant at the time so to be able to share that as a family just meant the world.

"It's amazing to be able to look back and have those photos with my mum and with my daughter."

David and Derek are continuing to work with CCLASP while they study for their BA in Photography at the college to photograph events and days out put on by the charity for children who are undergoing treatment or whose condition may be terminal.

☒ For the photographers, David and Derek, the shoots with families were also a moving experience.

"It was a great opportunity to meet all the families, who are fantastically strong considering what they're going through," said David, 40, from East Lothian.

Derek, 35, from Leith, said: "We've met families from different areas, different walks of life. Their experience is very inspiring."

Valerie Simpson, founder of CCLASP, said: "I have known Derek since he was born as his father and my husband are close friends. It has been fantastic to be able to use both Derek and David's photography expertise to benefit the families we work with. They are both a joy to work with and they have received some fantastic feedback from those who have been involved in their shoots."

CCLASP was set up by Valerie and Bill Simpson after their son Robert was diagnosed with leukaemia at the age of six. They started up the Edinburgh based children's charity in 1994 to help support children and groups of families, to express and

share the feelings, anxieties and the horror of having a child with a life-threatening illness.