

Hospital launches biggest ever fundraising project

Thursday Feb 28, 2013

The Countess of Chester Hospital's charity has recently launched its most ambitious fundraising appeal ever and is now looking to the local community for their support. The "Babygrow Appeal" has a target of £3million to build a brand new neonatal unit, which will be more than double the size of the current unit, providing improved facilities and a more spacious environment for the babies being cared for, and their families. One in every eight babies born in the UK will spend some time in a neonatal unit.

The hospital's current neonatal unit (often referred to as the Special Care Baby Unit) was built in 1974 and is now fairly outdated in terms of the décor and design. Despite this, the dedicated medical team provide the highest standards of care and treatment, and the size of the unit in no way impacts on the care that is currently provided.

Last year the Neonatal Unit cared for around 450 babies many of whom were very poorly, either in intensive care or on ventilators. Some babies stay in the unit for just a few hours, for others it can be weeks or even months. Understandably this can be a very anxious time for Mum and Dad who are often are spending a lot of time in the unit, and currently the restricted size of the unit means that they can't always be provided with the space and privacy that they would like. There is no separate room where siblings can be entertained or play freely and there is no dedicated counselling room, for when bad news has to be given. The Babygrow Appeal will provide all this and much more, in a brand new purpose built Neonatal Unit.

The appeal officially launched on 18th December 2012 with a carol concert at Eaton Chapel and has already raised around £375,000 which has been a fantastic start to the project. However, it does mean the charity still needs to raise £2,625,000 and recognises that with a small fundraising team they can't achieve this on their own. Help is needed! Fundraising manager Janet Ratcliffe said "We are absolutely delighted that with very little publicity so far we have already been offered support from individuals, companies, schools and charitable groups including Chester Lions. We are putting together a programme of events that we hope will appeal to all sectors within our local community and we hope that everybody will feel able to get involved in this appeal in some way, no matter how small." The charity is currently looking for people to take part in events, or organise their own fundraising activities, and would also be pleased to hear from anybody who would like to sign up as a volunteer or an Ambassador for the Babygrow Appeal.



Tara Jade, local businesswoman has agreed to chair the external fundraising committee. "I am delighted that The Standard Newspaper group have agreed to support the Babygrow Appeal with publicity on a weekly basis which will really help to keep their readers informed with the progress of the appeal and allow us to promote forthcoming fundraising events whilst also acknowledging the efforts of our volunteer fundraisers.

Events Fundraiser Kathy Kenney said "Not everybody realises that at the Countess of Chester Hospital we have a separate registered charity which exists to generate and manage charitable income which is used to enhance and improve patient facilities at the hospital. The charity does not use donations to replace government funding, instead they focus on areas not covered or fully supported by central NHS funds. At the Countess they believe that patients and their families deserve the very best, and charitable donations allow them to provide the extras over and above the basic provision of the NHS".

In recent years the fundraising team at the Countess of Chester Hospital has spearheaded several major appeals to improve facilities for patients and their families, and thanks to the generosity of the local community, each appeal has been successfully concluded. Projects have included raising £1.2 million to build a new breast care unit, almost £600,000 to extend and refurbish the Haematology and Oncology Unit, and more recently £300,000 was raised to provide overnight accommodation and a day lounge for families of patients being cared for on the Critical Care Unit. This accommodation is due for completion in October 2013. The charity now hopes that once again the local community will join forces with them as they endeavour to meet the challenge of raising £3million to build a fantastic new neonatal unit.

All babies need special care..... Some need it more than others!

"Our twins Matthew and Elin were born at 26 weeks in 2007. They were extremely poorly and spent 11 weeks in Intensive Care. During this time we experienced what can only be described as an emotional rollercoaster of highs and lows, not knowing from one day to the next whether they would survive. Matthew and Elin are now two lively 5 year olds attending school at Ysgol Glanrafon in Mold. We have no doubt that without the outstanding and dedicated care of the staff in the Neonatal unit it could have been a very different story"



Richard and Monica Hogg

Adele puts on her running shoes for Babygrow Appeal

Twenty nine year old Adele Cross from Chester is taking part in the Virgin London Marathon on Sunday 21st April and is hoping to raise £2000 for the appeal. Adele who works in the legal department at the Countess of Chester Hospital said "This will be the first ever Marathon I will ever have run, as I've previously been more involved in cycling and last year completed 1000 miles in the Chester-Berlin-Chester event. One of my close friends lost a baby and so this is a cause really close to my heart". Adele is really looking forward to this new challenge and as part of her training programme she is taking part in the Sheffield half marathon. If you would like to support Adele's efforts you can sponsor her at: www.justgiving.com/adele-cross1



Chester Childbirth Appeal pledges to support Babygrow

This volunteer led charity was established by ex-midwife Pat Daniels in 1991 with the aim of providing enhanced facilities and support a range of women and children's services at the Countess. Pat has committed to support the hospital's Babygrow Appeal over the next 3 years and was delighted to learn that Stoke City footballer Michael OwenI will fill you on this on Monday once the TV show has been aired

Alice is 100 days old – and wasn't even due to be born until 7th March!

Louise Lawson-Jones certainly got a 40th Birthday present she hadn't bargained for last November when she unexpectedly went into labour at 24 weeks and 3 days with her first baby. After arriving at the Countess, Louise was transferred to Arrowe Park Hospital because the Countess, as a designated Level 2 Neonatal Unit, cares for babies from 27 weeks upwards.

Alice was born weighing just 625 grammes and Mum Louise said

"Obviously it was a real shock for myself and husband Mark. We were actually due to go to Angelsey the following day for a 3 day cottage break to celebrate my Birthday but then Alice decided to arrive which certainly made it a memorable 40th for me! Over the past three months there have been lots of highs and lows and various milestones that Alice has achieved and having her 100 day celebration today has been lovely".

The neonatal team make a banner and personalised card, and bake a cake for all babies who are still with them at 100 days old and last week Cake, based in Seller Street Chester, produced a magnificent Babygrow cake to mark Alice's 100 day celebration.

Alice was transferred back to the Countess from Arrowe Park and her weight now is 5lbs 6oz. "I just can't wait now to be able to bring her home which hopefully won't be too long now. Alice has received wonderful care here at the Countess and I am very grateful to the dedicated medical team here at the Countess for looking after her. Having spent time in the unit myself I can see first-hand how a bigger unit will provide a host of benefits for parents who have to spend a lot of time in the unit, and I hope everybody will get behind the Babygrow Appeal and support it in whatever way they can, "Louise said".



Alice with Mum Louise (left) and Neonatal practitioner Laura eagles and Eirian Lloyd Powell, Neonatal Unit Manager (right)