



PRESS RELEASE

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Silence is Golden for Ryan - and his friends!

Fundraising Event at RNA Club, Gosport, Nets £2,250 for Smile4Wessex Appeal.

It's fair to say that 20-year old Ryan Claridge is no stranger to the Wessex Neurological Centre. Born prematurely at just 28 weeks, he suffered a bleed on the brain within days of birth and was initially treated at Guy's Hospital, London, where he was fitted with a shunt - a device to drain excessive fluid from the brain. Since moving to Hampshire, when he was just four, Ryan's condition has been regularly checked at the Wessex Neurological Centre in Southampton, where his broad smile and chatty personality make him a popular patient with staff. Unfortunately, shunts do not last indefinitely and are prone to blockage, so Ryan has had several stays on the Children's Neurosurgery ward, and twice undergone surgery to replace the device in years past.

2011 brought a particularly difficult period for Ryan and his family as he required major surgery four times in six weeks, and spent a total of nine weeks in the hospital. But you can't keep Ryan down for long, and he's bounced back in typical style – with a huge smile on his face and more stories to tell. Of course, all who know Ryan are delighted he's back to his usual self, including his many friends at the Royal Naval Association (RNA) Club on Fareham Road, Gosport, which hosted an evening of fundraising fun to benefit the Smile4Wessex Appeal, which is currently raising funds to part fund a state-of-the-art Children's Neurosciences Centre, and to celebrate Ryan's recovery.

Organised by Ryan's grandmother, Mary Claridge, and mum Di Patience, the event involved a variety of 'forfeits', including a sponsored head shave, which saw Ryan's friend Peter Redgell lose his shoulder length locks, and Craig Huckins subject himself to a painful chest wax, much to the delight of the audience of well over 100. One of the highlights of the evening was Ryan's sponsored one hour silence, a particularly tough assignment which was made even more difficult for him as people queued to try to tempt him to speak, each paying a £1 fine as they failed to do so. A raffle and charity auction, plus a sponsored cycle ride by Bob Webb and Rob Wilson, helped boost the total to an amazing £2,250 – far in excess of Mary and Di's expectations.

"We'd hoped to raise about £1,000 so we're over the moon to have more than doubled our target" said Di, "and we're so grateful to everyone who helped make it such a successful evening. And Ryan's grandmother, Mary, paid tribute to Ryan's consultant neurosurgeon, Owen Sparrow, and his team, saying, "we hope this goes some way to show just how much we appreciate the amazing job they do, and we're delighted that it will help to ensure that even more children will benefit from the excellent care that Ryan has received over the years".

Commenting on the event, Smile4Wessex Appeal Coordinator, Neil Westbrook said, "It's always a pleasure to attend such events, and we're hugely grateful to Mary, Di and all who helped make it such a hugely enjoyable and successful evening".

Full details of the Children's Neurosciences Centre Appeal can be found on the charity's web site (www.smile4wessex.org).

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CONTACT DETAILS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

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