PRESS RELEASE
10 August 2015

STEP THIS WAY TO FIGHT MENINGITIS

FAMILY AND FRIENDS of 6-year-old Taylor Filby, the Maldon youngster fighting back from meningitis, will join him for a sponsored walk to raise awareness of the disease and funds to help fight it.

Taylor, who is 7 this month (14 August), and his mum Sophia, 26, from Goldhanger in Maldon have organised the five mile walk to support charity Meningitis Now, founder of the meningitis movement and the only charity dedicated to fighting meningitis in the UK.

Over 150 people have been invited to take part in the event through Facebook, but everybody is welcome to go along.

The walk starts at 11am on Tuesday 25 August from Goldhanger Park and goes to Osea Leisure Park, via the Seawall, before returning along the same route.

“I will be raising money for Meningitis Now with sponsorship” Sophia said. “If you would like to help raise funds for the charity please contact me for a sponsor form.

“Or just come along for a nice walk in the fresh air with us – there are some beautiful views along the way – and learn how to spot the signs and symptoms of meningitis and take steps to protect yourself and your loved ones.”

Families joining in should bring a packed lunch for a picnic on the beach half way round and all children taking part will receive a balloon, medal, activity sheet and flag.

Mobile and salon based hairdresser Sophia is already donating £3 from every customer she sees to Meningitis Now to help the charity's fight to eradicate the disease that Taylor contracted as a baby.

“We are so lucky and extremely happy that Taylor is alive and well and has survived meningitis”, Sophia said. “He still suffers from the after-effects of meningitis, such as learning difficulties, concentration and memory issues.

“I really want to raise awareness of meningitis and its after-effects and help to donate as much as I can, to help the charity with its research and help other parents and children.”

Taylor was left fighting for his life when he was born in St John’s Hospital in Chelmsford in August 2008.

“Midwives rushed him off, saying he needed to see a doctor quickly” Sophia said. “After an hour they took me to the neonatal ward – my baby was puffed out all over his body with tubes everywhere – hands, feet, belly button, a vent helping him breathe.

“Doctors told me to prepare for the worst. They tried for over 12 hours to get him stable; he was fighting for his life.”
Thanks to support from Meningitis Now and one-to-one teaching at Taylor’s new school he is now making progress in school and life.

“Taylor is my miracle”, Sophia added, “every birthday is a reminder of how amazing my son really is.”

If you can’t make the walk but would like to donate you can do so at https://www.justgiving.com/TaylorFilby1

Sally Gillespie, Senior Community Fundraiser at Meningitis Now, said: “We’re really grateful to Sophia and Taylor for everything they’re doing.

“As a charity, which receives no public funding, we’re entirely reliant on the energy, enthusiasm and initiative of our supporters to raise the funds we need each and every day to continue our vital research, awareness and support work.

“Why not join them for what sounds like a lovely day and help fight back against meningitis.”

For more information and to donate visit www.meningitisnow.org

Ends

Editors Notes:

For further information please contact: Andy Hopkinson, Communications Officer at Meningitis Now, on 01453 768006, out of hours 07587 554857, or email andrewh@meningitisnow.org

### Meningitis and Septicaemia Facts

- Meningitis is usually caused by bacteria or viruses
- Meningitis is inflammation of the membranes that surround and protect the brain and spinal cord
- Septicaemia is blood poisoning
- Some bacteria that cause meningitis also cause septicaemia
- Meningitis and septicaemia often happen together – it is vital to know all the signs and symptoms
- The early signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia can be similar to ‘flu and include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting and muscle pain.
- The more specific signs and symptoms include fever with cold hands and feet, drowsiness, confusion, pale blotchy skin, stiff neck, dislike of bright lights and a rash which doesn’t fade under pressure.
- In babies, symptoms can also include being floppy and unresponsive, dislike of being handled, rapid breathing, an unusual, moaning cry and a bulging fontanelle (soft spot on the top of the head).
- There are an estimated 3,200 cases of bacterial meningitis and septicaemia each year in the UK.
- Following bacterial meningitis or septicaemia, one in ten people will die and at least a third of survivors will be left with lifelong after-effects such as hearing loss, epilepsy,
• Meningitis and septicaemia can affect anyone, of any age, at any time. However, babies and young children are most at risk, and young people between 15 – 24 years are also a higher risk group.
• In the past 20 years, effective vaccines have been developed to give protection against SOME types of meningitis. These are offered to all babies and young children as part of the UK childhood immunisation programme. BUT there are not vaccines to protect against ALL types.
• A vaccine to protect against meningococcal group B (Men B) disease, the most common cause of bacterial meningitis and septicaemia, will be introduced into the UK childhood immunisation programme in September 2015.
• If you suspect someone may be ill with meningitis or septicaemia, trust your instincts and get immediate medical help.

For more information visit www.MeningitisNow.org. Freephone helpline 0808 80 10 388.

About Meningitis Now

Meningitis Now is the founder of the meningitis movement and the only charity dedicated to fighting meningitis in the UK.

With nearly 30 years’ experience we are working towards a future where no one in the UK loses their life to meningitis and everyone affected gets the support they need to rebuild their lives.

Meningitis Now fights the disease on all fronts:
• Providing a powerful, united voice for people fighting meningitis.
• Saving lives by funding vaccine and preventative research.
• Reducing the disease’s impact through awareness.
• Rebuilding futures with dedicated support.
• Fundraising to deliver our plans.