

LITTLE STARS

Spring 2025

Welcome to your Newsletter

Saving Grace

“She’s really come into herself since she’s been home!”



SAVING GRACE

This past Christmas was an extra-special one in the Walsh household. It was the first Christmas the entire family could spend together at home.

The whole festive season was such a warm and wonderful time for parents Ashling and Gary, and all five of their children, including little Grace.

“Putting them to bed together on Christmas Eve and them all waking up to see Santa, it was just magic.”

Ashling, Grace and Danny’s mum

This togetherness meant so much because one year earlier, Grace – then just a few days old – had spent her very first Christmas in an incubator on the Neonatal High Dependency Unit (HDU) at Children’s Health Ireland.

Grace and her twin brother Danny arrived into the world in a hurry, born six weeks early. In addition to being born prematurely, Grace also had a serious condition that required surgery.

Grace’s parents had been warned about her condition – a doctor had spotted it during Ashling’s pregnancy – but that didn’t make this period any less worrying for them. Ashling knew she would be handing Grace over to the neonatal team soon after her birth, but she and Gary had to prepare themselves for a longer journey than anticipated when Grace’s condition was found to be more complex.

There were tough days during the seven long months Grace spent in the HDU.



Your Impact

Stories like Grace’s are a tribute to the generosity of caring people like you who kindly support Children’s Health Foundation.

Neonatal Clinical Nurse Manager 3, Jenny Dunne knows first-hand the power of every donation, large or small. Each one helps provide the life-saving treatments, specialised equipment and essential care that tiny infants need to survive and thrive.

“In 2022, with the help of caring and generous support, the HDU where Grace spent the first seven months of her life was opened. This unit features six high dependency beds for babies with additional care needs” she says. “This kind support has also meant that families get a welcome pack with milestone cards to capture lasting memories, helping to create moments of bonding.”

It is said that the measure of a community’s strength lies in how it cares for its most vulnerable members. With your help, Jenny and her colleagues are giving every newborn a fighting chance to grow, to live, and to flourish.

“The guilt I had at not being able to stay with her at night... the nurses had to push me out the door, send me home, telling me to go home to the kids and my husband,” says Ashling.

Ashling and Gary were so thankful for the Children’s Health Ireland team who looked after their daughter. “Grace was cared for with so much love and compassion,” recalls Ashling, “and I will be so grateful to them for that forever.”

As soon as she was able, Grace received the surgery she needed. It went smoothly, and about a month later, Grace was back with her family at home.

“We’re beyond grateful to have Grace home with us,” says Ashling. “When you spend time in the hospital it gives you perspective and makes you appreciate how lucky you are to have your family around you. At the end of the day that’s all that matters.”

Grace has a calm, independent personality, “She’s really come into herself since she’s been home. She’s honestly the best baby ever,” says Ashling.

As for her four brothers, “She makes one noise and they all run over like, ‘Oh my god, what’s wrong, what’s wrong?’” Ashling laughs. “Grace has them all wrapped around her little finger already!”





Team Power of 1 Remembering Saoirse O'Driscoll

In April 2024, the world lost a bright and beautiful soul, Saoirse O'Driscoll, to Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) at just 13-years-old.

In her memory, and inspired by her bravery, five devoted fathers – including Saoirse's dad – set out on an extraordinary journey last December: rowing across the Atlantic Ocean.

Team Power of 1 is united by a singular, powerful goal: to make a difference for children and families affected by CHD. As they battled the relentless waves and unforgiving conditions of the Atlantic, they did so with Saoirse in their hearts, driven by love, determination, and a vision for a future where CHD is better understood, and organ donation is universally embraced.

Their journey was not just about endurance – it was about raising funds, spreading awareness, and supporting the vital work of Children's Health Foundation. Their incredible efforts have so far raised over €530k.

Team Power of 1 was featured on the Late Late show in January where Saoirse's dad John told Patrick Kielty more about Saoirse. "She was just absolutely so special, as a young girl a very outgoing, happy-go-lucky child," John said. "She had been through surgery at a very young age, at six-months-old, and she was pretty hardened to life in so many ways... She was an absolutely, truly wonderful child we're blessed to have had the 13 years we had with her."

Other ways to support sick children this year!



Did you know that there are other ways to support sick children throughout the year? Every year, supporters like you help sick children by participating in the Women's Mini Marathon and the Dublin Marathon.

If the Dublin Marathon is on your bucket list this year, join Team Children's Health Foundation! We have charity entry spots available and would love your support in raising vital funds for Children's Health Ireland hospitals and urgent care centres.

The Women's Mini Marathon is due to take place on Sunday, June 1st and the Dublin Marathon is scheduled for Sunday, October 26th.

To join Team Children's Health Foundation, email our communities team at communities@childrenshealth.ie and we'll be happy to assist you.



Donate online:
childrenshealth.ie/donate



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