

## TRIP TO DISNEYLAND CELEBRATES NEW CHARITY PARTNERSHIP

The Grand Appeal in Bristol is the first children's hospital charity in the UK to sign up to an exciting new venture with leading American charity, Children's Miracle Network, which could raise hundreds of thousands of pounds for children's hospitals throughout the country.

Children's Miracle Network is launching 'Champions Across the United Kingdom', sponsored by Foresters, which recognises remarkable children who have triumphed despite severe medical challenges. The Champions programme brings together children from throughout the United States and Canada and now from the United Kingdom and Ireland as well.

It is part of a wider fundraising model that Children's Miracle Network is introducing in the UK by working with a number of children's hospitals across the country to raise money to help young patients receive the best healthcare. It will be based on Children's Miracle Network's highly successful American programme, which has raised over 3 billion dollars since its foundation in 1983, helping 17 million sick children in the United States and Canada each year.

To mark the start of this new venture, four-year old Grace Hardy from Southville in Bristol, has been chosen as the only child in the UK to take part in the annual 'Champions' programme which culminates at the Children's Miracle Network Celebration in Florida.

Representing Bristol Children's Hospital and the Grand Appeal, Grace jetted off earlier this week (11th March) in her role as a champion of sick children for a five-day celebration at Walt Disney World Resorts in Orlando, Florida. The trip of a lifetime was in recognition of her remarkable character in dealing with a lifetime of illness caused by her rare and chronic condition HDR syndrome (hypoparathyroidism, deafness and renal dysplasia), which can cause seizures, deafness, recurrent urinary infections and kidney damage.

She was joined by her parents Dina and Gervais and grandparents, as well as Laura Densem and Ria Warren from the Grand Appeal fundraising team who attended the celebration to see how the Children's Miracle Network fundraising model can work in Bristol and the region.

As they set off, Gervais and Dina Hardy said; “There are so many deserving children in hospital that we feel honoured that Grace has been chosen to represent not only Bristol but the whole of the UK. She shows tremendous courage dealing with her illness and is an inspiration to those around her. We know she is going to have a ball in America, especially as she is mad about Disney and loves dressing up as her favourite characters and watching the films over and over again!”

Nicola Masters, director of the Grand Appeal added; “Grace and her family really deserve this special treat and we are looking forward to working closely with Children’s Miracle Network to bring an innovative fundraising campaign to the UK that will help many more children like Grace in the future.”

‘Champions’ is a unique, annual gathering of children and families who have overcome serious illness or injuries. The purpose is to help call attention to and generate support for the important role of children’s hospitals. Around 70 children aged between 2 and 17 and representing hospitals in the US, Canada, Ireland and the UK will take part in the 2008 Children’s Miracle Network Celebration. The event includes Children’s Miracle Network-affiliated hospitals, media partners, sponsors, celebrities and volunteers and is a chance for children to meet, share their experiences and forge lasting friendships.

During their trip, Grace and her family had the chance to meet celebrities including Children’s Miracle Network co-founders Marie Osmond and John Schneider, Neil Flynn from TV show ‘Scrubs’, The Osmond Brothers, Taylor Hicks from ‘American Idol’, Mickey and Minnie Mouse and a host of entertainers, musicians and athletes. They also enjoyed a range of activities including visits to Walt Disney World theme parks, a live concert and black tie gala dinner and awards ceremony.

The Hardy family are keen supporters of the Grand Appeal and have raised nearly £10,000 for the charity through a parachute jump by Dina and fundraising activities by work colleagues at ‘Vodafone’ in the Galleries, Bristol where husband Gervais is retail manager.

To find out more about the Grand Appeal or to make a donation, visit [www.grandappeal.org.uk](http://www.grandappeal.org.uk) or call 0800 919649.

-ends-

**Image Caption: Grace Hardy, aged 4, with Wallace & Gromit at a special send-off party at New Oak Primary School in Hengrove, Bristol.**

**For further information please contact:**

Caroline Harris or Dani Marlborough at CHPR on (0117) 944 1415 or Julie Peel at CHPR on (0117) 966 6339

Laura Densem at The Grand Appeal on (0117) 927 3888, mobile 07825 261 381

Teri Nestel at Children's Miracle Network on 0750 669 4097

### **Notes to editor**

#### **Children's Miracle Network**

1. Children's Miracle Network is one of the USA's leading children's charities and as a non-profit organisation raises funds for a network of 170 children's hospitals throughout North America.
2. Founded in 1983, Children's Miracle Network has its headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah and is dedicated to improving the health of children by raising funds to provide specialist medical care, life-saving research and preventative education.
3. The organisation helps 17 million sick children a year and to date has raised more than 3 billion dollars.
4. For more information, visit [www.childrensmiracletnetwork.org](http://www.childrensmiracletnetwork.org) (US) or [www.childrensmiracletnetwork.uk](http://www.childrensmiracletnetwork.uk) (UK/Ireland)

#### **Foresters**

1. Foresters, is an international financial services organisation which has operated in the UK, US and Canada for over 130 years.
2. Foresters is committed to understanding the financial needs of its members, offering products and membership benefits to assist members with financial security and peace of mind.
3. Foresters supports nearly 100 charities across the UK and many local children's hospices. Last year worldwide our charity work involved 20,000 volunteers and some two million hours of community involvement, which helped to raise over £29 million for worthwhile causes. We measure our success not only by financial strength, but also by the positive impact we have on our members' communities.

## **The Royal Hospital for Children in Bristol and The Grand Appeal**

1. The Royal Hospital for Children in Bristol treats children from across the region with life-threatening illnesses and serves as the paediatric intensive care centre for the whole region.
2. Since its launch in 1997, Wallace & Gromit's Grand Appeal has raised over £12 million towards the building of the UK's first purpose-built children's hospital which opened in April 2001.
3. Wallace & Gromit's Grand Appeal ranks second only to the Great Ormond Street appeal of the late 1980s in terms of monies raised in support of a children's hospital.