

Josie's last hopes: *"I want pink balloons at my funeral. But first I want to go home."*

If this letter has reached you while someone you love is suffering from a life-threatening illness or has recently died, I sincerely apologise for intruding at such a sensitive time.



Morrison Chambers (4th floor),
32 Nassau Street, Dublin 2.

Tel: (01) 679 3188 Fax: (01) 673 0040

Email: info@hospice-foundation.ie

Web: www.hospice-foundation.ie

Charity No: CHY 6830

April 2008

Dear Friend,

If you were out for a drive and you saw a clutch of pink balloons tied to a gatepost, you'd probably think they were for a child's birthday party.

You'd never imagine they might be for the funeral of a little girl.

But when Josie died after a four year battle with cancer, her final wish was to have pink balloons at her funeral.

"I remember her on the ward with all the noise and everything going on around us, and she said, 'Am I going to have a funeral?' I said, 'Everyone has a funeral'. Then she looked at me and said, 'I want pink balloons at mine.' She wasn't upset. She was very calm, and so determined." Josie's Mum

It's hard, maybe impossible if you haven't been through it yourself, to imagine the horror of hearing a doctor tell you *'there's nothing more we can do'* for your child.

You might think this would be the end of hope itself. But like that gatepost full of pink balloons, things are not always as they might seem. Even at the end, there are things to hope for.



Nine year old Josie had one big hope... to go home. To her bedroom, where she felt safe. To her pet dog, who she missed so much. To everything that felt safe and familiar.

But Josie couldn't go home

You might be surprised to hear that, but it's true. Because until very recently, there was no system in place in Ireland to help parents care for a dying child at home.

For Josie, hospital was the only option.

But today, you can give real hope to another child like Josie. Because a simple gift of just €7 a month will help give a family the very support Josie's never had.

I believe there's only one place for a child like Josie...

... and that place is at home.

I believe there's only one bed that loving parents should be expected to sit beside when their child is fading from the world... the one they get tucked into every night.

If you're a parent, you don't need a panel of experts to tell you this. You just know it to be true. Because it's the only thing that makes sense.

And the truth is, that with the right support structures on hand - specialist palliative care nurses, doctors and co-ordinators - it *is* possible.

The only trouble is, that until very recently, these support structures have simply been missing.

Will you help us change the face of children's palliative care?

The Irish Hospice Foundation has been campaigning tirelessly for a home-based, specialist palliative care service for children. And the wonderful news is that it's now beginning to take shape.

In fact we're on the brink of changing the face of children's palliative care for ever.

Our first few Children's Palliative Care Nurses are already out helping parents to care for their children in their own homes. Turning Josie's hopes into reality.

“The heart of what we do is giving children and their families the ability to live every day to the full, right to the end. We're their for them through every step of the journey.”

Bevan Richie, Children's Outreach Nurse Co-ordinator



Why your €7 a month is so important to perilously ill children today

I believe that every child with a fatal illness who *can* be at home, *should* be at home. And I want them *all* to get the full support and assistance of our children's home care service.

But we are just at the beginning of this great task, and it won't be possible for us to reach out to every child who needs us without the support and generosity of people like you.

That's why your donation today of €7 a month is so important.

How your gift will make a vital difference...

Your €7 monthly donation today will go straight to work providing help and assistance to children whose only wish is to be cared for by their loving parents in the safety and comfort of their own home.

But more importantly, because it's a regular monthly gift, it will continue helping us to provide ongoing home-based medical support to children and their parents right throughout the coming year.

A real legacy for Josie

Sadly, the day after she spoke to her Mum about the arrangements for her funeral, Josie passed away. And the following day, she finally got to go home...

"We got her home the next day. All the family were there to meet us. And everywhere I looked, there were pink balloons. Tied to the trees, all over the lawn and the drive, in every room in the house... pink balloons. It was heartbreaking, but lovely too, because at least she got her final wish." Josie's Mum

I'd like to think Josie would feel glad about what we're achieving today. Because now, children like her have a real hope of going home when it matters.

But I'm worried about the future...

... because the truth is, that without donations from good people like you, we won't be able to reach out to all the children who need our help. Children who should be at home, but may have to end their days in hospital.

**I'm determined to stop that from happening... because every child matters.
And every single donation counts.**

**And that's why I really hope you'll help me today, by making a monthly gift
of at least €7.**

Thank you so much for your time, and I look forward to welcoming you as a supporter of palliative home care for children.

Yours sincerely,

Eugene Murray

Chief Executive

P.S. Children like Josie need your help more than ever right now, because the economy is jeopardising their chances of going home before they die. Will you help a sick child go home today?

