

COMMODORES' CHOSEN CHARITY 2018



Heart Link was formed in 1981, as a support group for parents and families who had a child suffering from a heart defect.

Over the years they have also become increasingly committed to improving facilities for young patients, their families and providing much needed valuable medical equipment.

Since 1981 they have collected, with the marvellous support and generosity of the general public, well over £4 million pounds. This has been used to fund projects large and small. From providing tea and coffee facilities in the communal kitchen next to the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit, providing apartments next to the unit for parents to stay in during their child's stay, to funding the introduction of ECMO into Great Britain in 1989.

ECMO is a modern invasive life-support technique which can be used in patients with extremely severe respiratory (lungs) and cardiac (heart) failure. The treatment is very expensive and labour intensive and, at that time, financial support from the NHS was out of the question. Mr Richard Firmin, Paediatric Cardiac Surgeon at Groby Road Hospital, Leicester, approached Heart Link and convinced them to finance the introduction of an ECMO programme.

Since November 1998 the Heart Link ECMO Centre (this is the official name of the ECMO programme) has treated numerous patients, not only babies but older children and adults. The Heart link ECMO Centre is now known world-wide as a very successful Unit.

ECMO is now financed by the NHS but there is still enormous input from Heart Link as they continue to help fund any ECMO research programme, finance medical and nursing staff who attend scientific meetings and teaching sessions, plus purchasing any new equipment needed to ensure that the highest and most modern standard of care is given to all those patients requiring ECMO treatment.

A note from the Commodore

The facilities provided at Glenfield Hospital by Heart Link recently allowed a family member and his fiancée to spend every moment of their son's life with him. The staff at Glenfield did everything they and their colleagues across the world could do to treat Harry but unfortunately his parents had to make the heart breaking decision to withdraw medical intervention.

They were able to spend the whole 2 months of Harry's life living in the hospital in the accommodation Heart Link fund and provide, which allowed them to make as many cherished memories as possible.

All the research and fundraising that Heart Link has done over the years meant that Harry was given every possible chance, including ECMO.

While for my family the money raised will be in memory of this special little boy we want to spread awareness of the amazing things that Heart Link do to help other children and their families.