



Precious moment: Christopher enjoys a holiday with his mum and dad in Austria in 2006

Charity helps couple keep memory of their son alive

By Graham Clark

NOBODY could have been happier or prouder than Karen and Kevin Capel when their son, Christopher, was born in the summer of 2002.

Over the weeks and months they watched with joy as their son grew into a bright, sporty, lively and fun-loving little boy.

But by the age of four, Christopher started to show signs of the illness that would claim his life within two years.

Now his mum and dad are determined that Christopher's name will live on as a symbol of hope.

They have launched a charity to help save young lives and to spare other families the heart-break they have suffered, and Kevin is now in line for a Best

of British Airways Outstanding Community Volunteering Award.

In partnership with the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR), the charity – Christopher's Smile – aims to raise money to fund development of new drugs to treat the condition medulloblastoma, an aggressive brain tumour, and other childhood cancers.

Kevin, a design lead in Im, said: "If we can help bring about a cure just one day earlier and that spares even one family the hell that we went through, then all our efforts will have been worth it."

The Capels' rollercoaster tale of good days and bad, of hope and despair, appears on their website, www.christopherssmile.org.uk. Brave Christopher finally lost his battle on June 5

Christopher's
Smile



coz kids get cancer too

this year, nine days before his sixth birthday. Now Kevin is easing himself back into full-time work at Waterside.

"BA have been very understanding, for which we're really grateful," he said.

Most of Kevin's spare time revolves around raising the charity's profile while Karen, a former language trainer at BA, is now a full-time fundraiser.

The couple have been shocked and dismayed at how under-funded research into childhood cancers has been.

Their immediate target is to raise £25,000 a year for the next five years to fund the work of a scientific research officer within the paediatric team at the ICR. To pay for a complete team headed by a neurobiologist over that same period would cost £1.2m.

Andy Pearson, professor of paediatric oncology, said: "The only way in which the 25 per cent of children with cancer who currently die can be cured is by the development of new drugs," he said.

"The ICR is uniquely placed to develop these drugs. Christopher's Smile will help enormously in achieving our goals."

You can donate via the charity's website and the 'give as you earn' facility at BA. Go into the 'off duty' page on ESS, then

'staff charities' and 'BA Giving Scheme' to access the charity giving form. Fill in the details and send to pay services.

Peter Blake from Im will be running the London Marathon in aid of the charity next year.

For more information email info@christopherssmile.org.uk.

CANCER FACT FILE

- 200,000 children worldwide are diagnosed with cancer every year
- In the UK, one child in 600 is diagnosed with childhood cancer
- One in four children do not survive their illness
- Even when cancer treatment is successful the side-effects can be devastating
- For some childhood cancers, the survival rate has not changed since the 1970s.