

Dromore Leader

SAM chosen charity for Oyster Festival



ABOVE: In one of a series of successful fundraisers for SAM, Wes Kettlely and Paul Maguire take part in a marathon spin-a-long. BELOW: Sam McCausland, pictured with younger brother Callum, parents Tracy and William McCausland and grandparents Sam and Patricia Letters.



LOCAL charity SAM (Struggle Against Muscular dystrophy), which has raised more than £150,000 in its first year, is the chosen charity for next month's 17th annual Hillsborough Oyster Festival.

Named for Hillsborough lad Sam McCausland, who suffers from the congenital form of the progressive and ultimately fatal muscle-wasting disease, SAM is delighted to have been nominated as the featured charity for the September 3-5 festival.

Congenital Muscular Dystrophy leads to severe muscle wasting and as muscles continue to waste children become quadriplegic; they suffer from scoliosis and painful muscle contractures and eventually lose the ability to breathe and eat without assistance.

There is currently no treatment and no cure, but in the past year SAM has raised what organisers called the "phenomenal sum" of £150,000, money already being put to use in the struggle to find that treatment and cure.

"SAM is delighted to have been nominated as this year's charity for the Hillsborough Oyster Festival," said Sam's mum Tracy McCausland, one of the charity's founders.

"It has been an exciting year for our charity," she added. "SAM has grown from a small fundraising campaign into a strong, focused charity, intent on building public awareness and continuing to raise funds for vital research to help find a treatment and eventually a cure for Congenital Muscular Dystrophy."

To that end, Oyster Festival events will include a fashion show on Thursday,

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September 3 in the festival marquee (Hillsborough coasthouse) featuring Wish Bridal Boutique, Magowan's Fashions and McCall's of Lisburn.

Admission will cost £10 (including light refreshment). Doors open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start. Tickets hotline: 028 9268 9717.

There will also be a Masquerade Ball on Friday, September 4, a Soapbox Derby and family fun day with live entertainment and competitions throughout the village on Saturday, September 5 and Super Dream Car Sunday on September 6. (For ticket information email info@pleasefixsam.com).

Meanwhile, SAM is stressing that very penny raised in its campaign goes straight into the hands of researchers working to find treatments for CMD and thanks go to everyone who has donated their time, expertise, products and services to the zero-cost charity.

So far SAM has funded the set-up and first-year running costs for the CMD International Patient Registry, which will capture vital information on disease subtypes and genetic mutations and eventually provide researchers and scientists with information on disease progression and subjects for clinical trials.

At the end of this month the first £100,000 SAM Translational Research Grant will go to tender.

SAM has also created a strategic alliance with international advocacy group 'CureCMD' to drive forward its efforts and hopes to work closely with them.