

# MONEY RAISED AFTER MENINGITIS TRAGEDY OF 16-MONTH-OLD



PROUD: Fiona Brannan, left, with Jen Batchelor; right, Cy's sister Iona with a cheque for the cash

## Girls in bid for beauty crown

BUDDING beauty queens from across the North East will soon go head to head in the annual search for Miss Newcastle.

Following an extensive search, 20 finalists from all corners of the region will come together for a glittery finale event at Newcastle Civic Centre on Friday, May 21.

The shortlisted contestants were chosen following almost two months of searching by competition organisers Tyne Tees models, which included scouting in Eldon Square shopping centre, a bus tour around the North East, internet applications and local heats held by a variety of restaurants, bars and other venues.

The girls, aged 16-23, were put through their paces in a variety of photo shoots and participated in fundraising on behalf of the Percy Hedley Foundation, which is the competition's chosen beneficiary for 2010.

The final will see each contestant go before a panel of judges and an audience in a special fairy-tale-themed opening round, wearing Alice in Wonderland costumes designed by students from Newcastle College.

They will then don swimwear and evening-wear for two more rounds, with the winner awarded the Miss Newcastle title and guaranteed a place in the semi-final of this year's Miss England competition.

For more information or to book tickets, visit [www.missnewcastle.com](http://www.missnewcastle.com) or 0191 261 7700.

## Crime advice

RESIDENTS in the Darras Hall area of Ponteland have two chances to meet local police officers this week.

The Northumbria Police mobile unit will be visiting The Broadway shopping area on Thursday between 1pm and 2.30pm.

And a drop-in session will be held at The United Reformed Church on Saturday, from 11am to 12 noon.

On both occasions, people can discuss any concerns they have about crime and anti-social behaviour and receive crime prevention advice.

Officers will be on hand to suggest ways in which homeowners can keep their own properties and gardens secure and how best to report offences.

# Cy's memory will live on to help others

By LIZ WALKER  
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HIS young life was tragically cut short by meningitis.

But bubbly Cy Brannan will never be forgotten and his memory continues to inspire fundraising to help others with the disease.

It was an emotional day for mum Fiona as she thanked volunteers at Sheriff Hill Methodist Church, Gateshead, for raising £3,000 in honour of her son by holding a weekly coffee morning.

"I cried my eyes out when they told me how much they raised," said Fiona, 31, who also has three other children Kane, nine, Blade, five and Iona, three.

"It is a fantastic amount and I was so touched that they would dedicate their fundraising to Cy. It is great to think that his memory is going to help others in some way."

In October 2007 Cy was playing happily in the garden when Cy was struck down with the illness.

Within 24 hours the 16-month-old was taken from his parents. The first sign something was



TRAGEDY: Cy Brannan

wrong came when Cy had a slight cold. His mum checked his skin and discovered a pin-prick mark on his neck which didn't disappear when she pressed it.

Fiona said: "I panicked and we got him to hospital in 10 minutes but what began as a couple of pin-pricks soon covered his entire body."

"Within just two hours there wasn't a patch of his body you could see through the bruising. People say that meningitis is quick but I never believed anything could spread that fast."

Cy was transferred from Gateshead's Queen Elizabeth Hospital to Newcastle General, where doctors said it was one of the worst cases of meningococcal septicaemia they had seen. And despite their best efforts, Cy died in the early hours of the following morning.

Fiona, who lives with husband Simon, a manager for gala Bingo in Sheriff Hill, said: "The first few years since his death were really hard. Our family was shattered."

"We all missed him so much, but we have a lot of happy memories and we try to think of those. I have done bits of fundraising myself to keep his memory alive and do whatever I can to raise awareness of meningitis."

The money was raised by volunteers from Cornerstone, a weekly coffee morning and second hand sale at Sheriff Hill Methodist Church. Coordinator Jen Bachelor said: "We were inspired by Fiona's story. We all remember Cy when he used to come in and it was a shock when we found out what happened. She has been through so much and we wanted to do what we could to help other families like hers."

The £3,000 will be split between Meningitis UK and the Meningitis Trust.

## What to look out for

MENINGITIS is an inflammation of the lining that covers the brain and spinal cord.

Meningococcal septicaemia occurs when poisons caused by the meningococcal bacteria enter the bloodstream.

It is difficult to diagnose as it has similar symptoms to the common cold or flu. Classic symptoms of meningitis are headache, stiff neck and a dislike of bright light. Other symptoms can include difficulty supporting own weight, fever, vomiting and diarrhoea and confusion and drowsiness.

Common symptoms of meningococcal septicaemia include aching limbs, cold hands and feet and a rash which starts like pinprick marks and develops into bruising.

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