

Client: Candis
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Value: 1909.2

TRAGIC KATY'S FAMILY IN LINE FOR TOP AWARD

Fundraising efforts win praise

By chief reporter COREENA FORD

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THE FAMILY of a young woman who died after suffering an epileptic seizure are up for a national award for the fundraising work they have carried out in her memory.

Katy Doyle was just 24 when she died following a fit caused by a condition called sudden unexpected death in epilepsy (SUDEP).

The young clerical officer had only been diagnosed 18 months before she died in December 2008 and her devastated family had not been told that epilepsy could prove fatal.

Her parents Ian and Helen, both 55, and brother Stewart, 29, channelled their personal tragedy into helping other epilepsy sufferers, raising more than £51,000 as they battle to raise awareness of the condition.

Now the family, of Chester-le-Street, County Durham, are in the grand final of the Outstanding Family of the Year Awards 2010, having already been named as winners of the fundraisers' cat-

egory.

They will take part in the final of the competition – organised by Candis health magazine – at Knowsley Hall, Merseyside, on August 23, where they will be up against other families from around the UK to win a luxury holiday

“A lot of people say what we are doing is inspirational, but we don't feel like that,” admits Helen. “We just see it as something we have to do on behalf of Katy, to celebrate her life.

“There are services that could have given Katy life-saving advice, but we didn't know about them.”

Dad Ian added: “We're determined that this lack of information has got to change.

“No parent should lose a child knowing that with the right help, that child could still be alive.”

In the months after her death Katy's parents Helen, her husband Ian, and health improvement specialist Stewart, began campaigning for more information to be made available to people with epilepsy and their families when they are diagnosed.

They also called for this to be followed by essential, comprehensive care plans.

Soon after losing her daughter,

Helen, assistant director of human resources at Newcastle University, said: “The loss of a child is beyond belief but to know that it didn't have to happen makes it so much worse.

“It is clear that there is a lot of information produced about epilepsy but this information is in a lot of different places and is not getting to those who really need it to enable them to live their lives as safely as possible.

“A specialist nurse can support a neurologist and the individual in providing essential information and access to community and multi-agency services.

“This is not happening in many areas, both regionally and nationally. We need action not words.”

And the family have certainly taken action of their own.

Last year, 54 of the DoYLES' family and friends ran the Great North Run for Katy, handing out her favourite sweets and drink – vodka and coke – at the finish.

They also organised a fundraising “celebrating Katy” event, and Helen and Stewart are also planning a sponsored trek along the Great Wall of China.

The pair will take part in the challenge along the monument in aid of



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Epilepsy Action, from October 9 to 17 in a trip which will also see them help to rebuild the wall in some places, as a lasting tribute to Katy.

Candis magazine editor Debbie Attewell said: "The Doyles really are an inspiration.

"We were hugely moved by their determination to remember Katy in such a positive life-affirming way, and the whole family has pulled together for a great cause."



REMEMBERED: Katy Doyle