

Your Cause



■ Melanie Sykes



■ Melanie Blatt



■ Jonathan Ross



■ Melanie Chisholm



■ Tony Hadley



■ Tom Conti

Star backing for Lorraine's dream to cure rare disease

Mother of sufferer wants to raise £1m towards research

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A campaigner who founded a charity to raise awareness about a debilitating children's disease has launched a star-studded fundraising campaign to search for a cure.

Lorraine Thomas, of West Heath Road, Hampstead, has enlisted Hampstead celebrities for her 10-month Garden of Hope campaign which aims to raise £1million for her charity, The Lowe Syndrome Trust.

Supported by Hampstead Garden Suburb resident Jonathan Ross, who helped Ms Thomas set up the charity in 2000, the trust raises money to fund research into the rare and incurable condition.

Affected children can be born with cataracts in their eyes, leaving them blind or partially sighted.

Depending on the severity of the disease, some sufferers



■ Lorraine Thomas with son Oscar who has Lowe syndrome

never walk or talk.

Others have glaucoma, seizures, epilepsy, arthritis, scoliosis, weak bones and muscles, rickets and kidney wasting.

Other supporters include Spice Girls singer Melanie Chisholm, actor Tom Conti and TV presenter Melanie Sykes, who all live in Hampstead.

Spandau Ballet singer Tony Hadley and All Saints singer Melanie Blatt, who

lived in Muswell Hill and Belsize Park until recently, are also involved.

Ms Thomas said: "It has taken us ten years to raise the first million pounds and we're now seeing breakthroughs that could mean a cure. But the work needs more funds and I don't want to wait another 10 years to find them."

Her son Oscar was diagnosed with Lowe syndrome when he was five.

Despite being given very few years to live he is now aged 17, but Ms Thomas said his future depends on research.

"Having a son diagnosed with Lowe syndrome is the most heartbreaking and frightening experience. No child should have to suffer in this way. Each day you live in fear."

She intends to dedicate the campaign to the memory of Daniel Hunter, a six-year-old from northern England who died of the disease recently.

"It's so hard competing against all the other charities. To have the celebrities is unusual and they really help sell the cause."

A £5 donation allows people to add a leaf with a message to their favourite celebrity's tree. When enough money has been raised, donors can track the project their money is funding.

■ Visit The Garden of Hope at www.gardenofhope.co.uk