

YOUR CAUSE

One Direction pitch in to help Lorraine

Hoodie will be auctioned for charity

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Boy band One Direction aim to help a Hampstead charity raise funds for vital research into an incurable children's disease.

The chart-topping band donated a signed hoodie which is up for auction, with all the proceeds going towards the Lowe Syndrome Trust.

The charity was set up 12 years ago by Hampstead mother Lorraine Thomas, whose son Oscar was diagnosed with the illness at the age of five.

The band are joining a host of celebrities who have helped raise more than £1million for research into Lowe syndrome – a rare genetic condition that causes physical and mental disabilities.

It is thanks to Hampstead Garden Suburb resident and TV presenter Jonathan Ross, who has been a trustee of the charity since its foundation and has become good friends with 19-year-old Oscar, that Ms Thomas was able to bring One Direction on board.



■ Lorraine, Oscar and the hoodie

"Jonathan introduced me to One Direction at the BBC charity day and they were delighted to be able to help," Ms Thomas said.

"It's a fantastic item to have because they're so big worldwide now."



■ One Direction with two patrons of the Lowe Syndrome Trust, Lisa Voice, centre, and Christopher Biggins, third from right

Pictures: Lorraine Thomas and Nigel Sutton

Sporty Spice, Melanie Chisholm, who lives in Hampstead, is also contributing half the proceeds from her 2013 calendar to the trust.

Earlier this year Rod Stewart and Penny Lancaster invited guests to donate to the charity at their wedding instead of giving presents and the couple raised £240,000 at a charity day.

Challenging

The charity's patrons include TV star Melanie Sykes, singer Tony Hadley, actor Christopher Biggins and the owner of Express Newspapers Richard Desmond, from Hampstead Garden Suburb.

Ms Thomas said running a small charity was extremely challenging, but with the help of star-studded backers she created a Garden of Hope website earlier this year where celebrities compete with each other over how many donations they can attract to their online tree.

Despite having raised more than £1m through Ms Thomas' tireless campaigning, Lowe syndrome still requires significant research.

On December 14 the trust held its fourth international meeting at the Royal Society in Pall Mall, where scientists presented their research on the illness to date.

"The meeting was an over-

whelming success and a step closer to establishing a drug to emulate the missing enzyme causing Lowe syndrome," Ms Thomas said.

It was an emotional day for one parent who had just lost his eight-year-old son to the illness, but Ms Thomas said he wanted to continue working with the charity to find a cure for the "devastating" disease.

■ To be in with a chance of winning the signed One Direction hoodie, email your bids to lowetrust@gmail.com and visit www.gardenofhope.co.uk to contribute to one of the celebrity's trees.