

CAMPAIGN: CENTRE PRAISED FOR THIS TOP INITIATIVE

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DOWN SYNDROME ADS ARE HUGE BOOST TO STAR NOAH

BY ESTHER MCCARTHY



THE family of a little boy born with Down syndrome and other health issues have told how they felt "supported and empowered" when he was picked to take part in a national awareness campaign.

Karl and Jennie Kelly said they reached a turning point following a difficult first year when their boy Noah, who is now three, took part in the moving campaign named 21 Faces

It is The Down Syndrome Centre's annual drive to celebrate the uniqueness and diversity of children with Down syndrome, while also aiming to challenge some of the misconceptions about Down syndrome along the way.

It's now in its third year and features the progress of the same 21 children who have featured since it first launched.

DIFFICULT

Among them is little Noah, who first appeared in the campaign while pulling through from a difficult period of seizures that were impacting on him and his family.

"It's his third year and it has been really overwhelming to see the response, and empowering to us as a family," said dad Karl.

"It was our first child and it was a shock - you're in territory you never expected to be. Noah had also been going through a period of infantile spasms where he was having up to 100 seizures a day and we were in a period of trial and error until we found a medication that worked.

"The campaign really marked a turning point for us," added Karl.

"He was all over billboards everywhere, being celebrated. Friends were ringing us to say they'd seen him and would say: 'You and Jennie are doing a great job.' It really helped us as a family."

The 21 Faces campaign aims to celebrate the progress of people with Down syndrome and show that the condition does not define them - they are as unique and diverse as the rest of us.

Every year, it features moving testimonials about the subject, penned by loved ones. This time, Noah's grandmother Margaret Carty made a moving tribute.

FUNNY

"When Noah was born with Down syndrome it was a shock, but I can honestly say that he has brought nothing but joy to our families," she said in the testimony.

"Noah is a gentle little boy with a great sense of humour, although he has developed a bit of a stubborn streak lately! He has an infectious laugh and finds the silly antics of his Grandad Ben particularly funny.

"Noah attends mainstream preschool once a week and will be attending full time in September.

"Noah's speech has improved a lot over the last few months - he makes a great effort to repeat words you say to him which is brilliant as this time last year he didn't have any words.

"He doesn't walk independently yet, but we are hopeful that it won't be long before he does. We are all very proud of this little man and all his achievements so far!"

The family, from Clonsilla in Dublin - who welcomed Noah's little sister Robyn into the world last week - were unaware that he had the condition until he was born.

"It was our first child so it came as a shock. You're nearly mourning for the child you think you're going to have. But we got incredible support from our parents, families and friends. And we found a site from an American blogger called Noah's Dad, written by the parent of a boy with Down syndrome. That really helped us a lot and is why we picked the name Noah.

"The Down Syndrome Centre was a great support to us and we realised we are not alone here."

Now Noah is meeting many of his milestones. He has also benefited greatly from early intervention services.

Karl particularly likes that the campaign means members of the

public can follow Noah's and the other participating children's progress. "He's really funny and affectionate and he has a great sense of humour and we're delighted he's involved in the campaign every year."

SUPPORTED

The 21 Faces campaign is supported by Dunnes Stores, who will display a 21 Faces photo exhibition in Cornelscourt Shopping Centre and 21 Faces posters in several of their locations around Dublin city centre.

The campaign is also supported by an in-bus poster campaign by Dublin Bus.

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PROUD: Karl and Noah at one of the campaign posters

DIAMOND COAST HOTEL
★★★★

Family Activity Breaks



STAR: Noah features in the 21 Faces campaign

"NO FLY" CRUISING FROM DUBLIN

SPAIN, PORTUGAL & GIBRALTOR 30TH JULY '18
12 NIGHTS - CRUISE HIGHLIGHTS

- La Coruña is your gateway to the pilgrimage town of Santiago de Compostela
- From Cadiz, opt to visit magnificent Seville, capital of Andalucia
- Take a cable-car to the top of the Rock of Gibraltar, home of the famous Barbary apes
- From the imposing Sao Jorge Castle, the spectacular view of Lisbon encompasses the old city's pastel-coloured buildings, the Tagus River and the Ponte 25 de Abril suspension bridge
- La Rochelle is one of France's most attractive towns

CANARY ISLANDS & MADEIRA 11TH AUGUST
15 NIGHTS - CRUISE HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore Lanzarote's amazing volcanic scenery in the National Park.
- Relax at Playa de las Canteras beach, a short walk from the Palmas cruise terminal
- Tenerife is dominated by Mount Teide, Spain's highest peak
- Enjoy one of Madeira's oldest traditions - the famous wicker basket ride
- Board one of the famous yellow trams for a relaxing ride through Lisbon passing many of the city's historic landmarks

WILL 'HER

LAST night Conor O'Donohue performed at Dublin's 3Arena, supporting The Dubliners, rising Irish stars Wild Youth and the hot young Dublin four-piece The Script.

Conor enjoyed the thrill of sharing stage with Niall Horan and their mentors, The Script.

But for Conor, nothing compares to the band's new charity single Foo Fighters' song, My Hero, which will raise €250,000 for four Irish charities.

One of the charities set to benefit from the single - part of DIY store Wick's Heroes campaign - is Down Syndrome Ireland, with which the late mum Jackie had a personal connection.

Conor, the youngest of four brothers from Killester on Dublin's northside, was just 17 years old when his mother died from a brain tumour in 2011.

"Doing this single is a huge thing for me because my mum did a lot of work with Down Syndrome Ireland and the Down Syndrome Centre," he told the Sunday World.

"And so it's super important and the other lads in the band, how close I was to my mum, the stuff as we can for all the charity work with Down Syndrome Ireland which is my heart."

"My mother was a teacher in primary school and worked with kids with special needs there she pretty much dedicated her life to raise money for the Down Syndrome Centre in Ireland.

"Growing up and going to school and getting to know that she did, and getting to be part of it."