

THE FAMILY of a young skiing instructor who died after suffering from a brain tumour for seven months have already raised more than £22,500 for the hospice who cared for him, via an online blog of his story.

Ali Rainback, 37, from Wheathampsted was diagnosed with a brain tumour last November and died at the Hospice of St Francis in Berkhamsted on June 22nd.

The owner of a successful skiing business, New Generation Ski School, in the Alps, Ali loved mountains, sports, adventure and travelling the world and lived half his year in France and the rest of his time globe-trotting and back at his Wheathampstead home. He was due to be married later this year.

Along with his mother Diana, his father Ian, brother Simon, sister in law Jo and his fiancée Jeanette, Team Rainback, as the family became known, helped keep everyone up to date and in touch via <http://www.greymatterstousall.blogspot.com/>

During the final stages of his illness when Ali became too ill to type, Diana would keep the site running and type what Ali could ask her to.

The site has been visited almost 70,000 times and has hundreds of postings and comments made by approximately 200 people a day. Throughout Ali's illness it provided a vital connection for the family to communicate with the hundreds of people affected by Ali's story around the world.

Diana Rainback, of Kimpton, Herts, said: "Everyone I speak to in the village has been on the blog or knows of it.

"It's something for people to focus on – a way they can help us too and a way of staying in touch.

"I want to carry on the blog - to keep it going, to help in doing the things Ali would have liked to do – to help children, to keep people active, to indulge in his love of sport. He loved people, he loved helping people. He was fun, had vitality, loved to get everyone involved. They all say the light has gone out in Courcheval because he isn't there.

"We should all be allowed access to a Hospice whether for pain relief, symptom control and respite care or to allow us to end our days with grace and dignity in a peaceful place.

"Those who were able to visit the Hospice of St Francis will know what a special place it is. The beautiful buildings set in lovely gardens, the dedicated professionals giving such wonderful palliative treatment, the loving care from the nursing staff and the marvellous food from the

chef all backed up by a huge number of volunteers all help to provide a calm sanctuary.

“We cannot speak too highly of the loving care we are all receiving from everyone here. We will remember this forever as a very precious time in our lives and be eternally grateful that such a beautiful place and such special people are here to help us now and in the future and we thank them all from the bottom of our hearts.”

Ros Taylor, Director of the Hospice of St Francis, said: “Ali was an extraordinary young man who made a huge impact on everyone he met.

“There were many people who played a role in his care, staff and volunteers and all have been touched by his story.

“The blog has inspired thousands of people along his journey, as had he throughout his life and the comments are amazing.”

In the two weeks since his death, more than £12,500 has already been raised for the Hospice of St Francis.

But the family hope to raise £100,000 – enough to open a new bed in the Hospice inpatient unit.

<http://www.justgiving.com/alirainback> has been set up by the Rainback family to help collect donations on behalf of Ali for the Hospice.

Adds Dr Taylor: “I would like everyone to be aware of Ali's story, the generosity he inspired in his life and now in his death.

“It confirms to me that what we do is so important and Ali was very clear that the message of hospice care needs to extend further into our catchment area and to the highest level of government.”

Ali's funeral takes place on Friday at the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul in Kimpton Hertfordshire, SG4 8RR at 2.45pm and afterwards at Kimpton Memorial Hall, SG4 8RD. Family flowers only but donations gladly accepted for Hospice of St Francis. Details for online giving above.

For more information please contact PR Officer, Hospice of St Francis, Claire de Silva - 07515294632

NOTES TO EDITORS :

The Hospice of St Francis is an independent charity that provides free, specialist and professional support and care for people with terminal illness across West Hertfordshire and the Chiltern area of Buckinghamshire.

We provide tailored help for each individual patient's needs and work closely with them to support their choices.

Care is given at our purpose built Berkhamsted facilities, in the patient's home or via outreach care in local hospitals and nursing homes.

The Hospice of St Francis currently has eleven inpatient beds. Many of our patients come for short stays to improve difficult symptoms (such as pain, breathlessness, nausea or anxiety) and are able to return home. If patients are reaching the end of their illness, then we can care for them at the Hospice until they die.

As well as nursing and medical care, we provide physiotherapy, occupational therapy, complementary therapies and family support. All our services combine to give our patients total care when time is precious.

Our Day Hospice provides a relaxed and supportive change of scene for patients who are being cared for at home. We offer access to therapies, medical assessment and emotional support also providing a break for carers.

Our Specialist Home Care Nurses work with our Hospice doctors, GPs and District Nurses to achieve the best possible care for patients at home, which may be over many months.

Our skilled team provide support for patients and their families with the difficult emotional, practical and spiritual worries that accompany serious illness.

Our Family Support team offers practical, social, emotional and psychological advice to patients and their families throughout their illness, helping them to manage the difficult issues.

They also provide an extensive bereavement support service including a telephone support line, support groups, family therapy and individual counselling for adults and children.

Education is important to St Francis and we offer a selection of study days, workshops, placements and courses for nurses, doctors, and other healthcare professionals at the hospice, local hospitals and in the local community.

Ultimately, we hope to bring peace, comfort and dignity to people, helping them to live life to the full and provide essential support for their families and carers.

Key facts:

- The Hospice of St Francis makes no charge for any of its services.
- The average stay at St Francis is 8 days – 60 per cent of patients then go home to continue their treatment. A hospice isn't always the end of the road.
- Each bed costs nearly £100,000 to open and run in the first year – just £12 a month would pay for 2 medical oxygen tanks.
- Our running costs in 2008 will be £3.3m and we continue to need funds.
- This year we will receive 22 per cent of our running costs from the NHS.
- There are on average 130 patients being cared for at home by our specialist nurse team.
- We have 700 volunteers who help us in all aspects of the hospice in the kitchen, in our inpatient unit and day hospice, with family support, gardening, fundraising, in the shops, in the offices.
- Any donation, large or small, is gratefully received and makes a real difference. You can support the Hospice financially in different ways.
- We can offer information to companies, community groups or individuals wishing to support us. Call the Fundraising Team on 01442 869555.