

2008 Family Face of the Appeal

Meet the Gaythorpe family, this year's Family Face of the Piggy Bank Appeal. Matthew (age 6) was born with a rare genetic condition called Autosomal Recessive Polycystic Kidney Disease (ARPKD), a condition that damages his liver and causes his kidneys to fill with cysts.

He also suffers from hypertension (high blood pressure), nephrogenic diabetes insipidus (which means his kidneys cannot concentrate urine) and narcolepsy. His complex conditions and the cocktail of medications used to manage them means Matthew's organs are under constant pressure. Eventually, he will need kidney transplants and possibly a new liver.

Like many families caring for a child with a life-threatening illness, Matthew's parents Alex and Andrew say the stress and uncertainty has had a profound impact on their lives.

"I don't know if Matthew is going to be with us in five year's time and having to deal with that over a long period of time wears you down," explains Andrew.

"I think the only way we will get through it is if we stay together as a family. Any support we have to help with that – which is what Very Special Kids gives us – is worth its weight in gold."

Matthew's older brothers, Ben (11) and William (9), attend Sibling Days at Very Special Kids where they meet other children going through similar experiences.

"You can't do it alone," adds Andrew. "That's why the Piggy Bank Appeal is so important for families like ours. It's very, very tough and you need support. For the community to get behind Very Special Kids means we don't have to do it alone."



Matthew (centre) and his brothers Ben (right) and William (left) attend Millgate Primary.

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- Andrew Gaythorpe, Matthew's Dad



You can support a family like Matthew's this year by raising **\$5,000**