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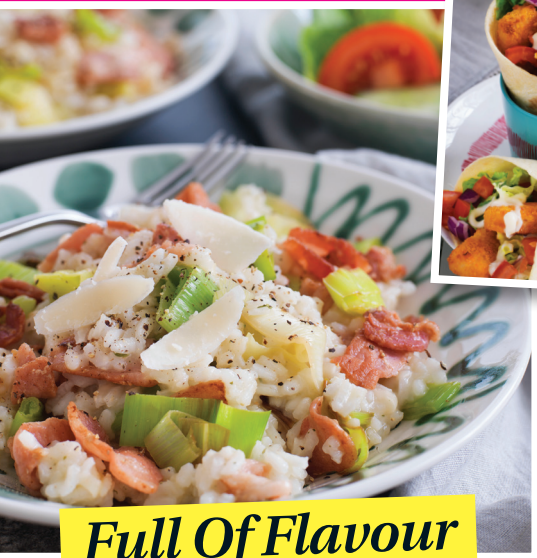
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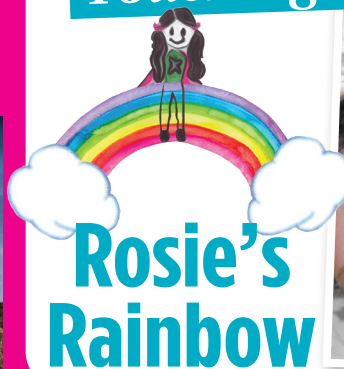
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# The Story of Rosie's Rainbow



Rosie with her sister Ellie and the family dog

## How one little girl's dream brought music, joy and control to thousands of children staying in hospital

**W**hen Carolyn Mayling lost her 11-year-old daughter Rosie in 2003 to a rare illness, she and her entire family's world was rocked to its core.

In the years following, Carolyn and her family summoned all of their strength, determination and love for Rosie to create a foundation in her memory. The aim was to help sick and disabled children and their families, born from an idea Rosie had while in hospital.

"Rosie was witty and cheeky," remembers Carolyn. "She didn't suffer fools gladly. She had a strong sense of

justice and really fought other people's corners if she thought something wasn't fair."

Carolyn and her family run the Redroofs School for the Performing Arts in Maidenhead, where Rosie and her sister Ellie were also pupils. From a young age Rosie showed great talent, even writing a musical when she was ten to raise money for a family friend's daughter who needed a new wheelchair.

This creativity and kindness never left Rosie, even as she endured long stays at John Radcliffe's Children's Hospital in Oxford as a result of being diagnosed with vasculitis, a rare and

devastating illness affecting the blood vessels.

"One day, she was in the hospital playroom, and I'd been chatting to the play specialist who had an interest in musical theatre," explains Carolyn. "Rosie looked up from what she was doing and she said, 'You know, when I'm better, I'm going to raise money for the children in hospital to make their stays better, so that they never have to be bored like I am. I want to make things better for them.'

"She was actually on a ward with lots of children with cancer, and she'd often say she thought they were a lot worse off than she was



Carolyn Mayling

because they'd lost their hair. She felt that she was one of the lucky ones, although she obviously was very ill."

After being





Actress Joanne Froggatt with Andy, Carolyn and a young patient



Otis connects with music on the ward

discharged, Rosie sadly passed away on May 14, 2003 after she suffered a fatal pulmonary haemorrhage.

"After Rosie died, I felt that I had to honour her wish to help others," Carolyn recalls. "Because Rosie was very musical, I had a chat with the Play Team Services and asked, what's going to make a difference that keeps her memory alive? They suggested music therapy, and I thought, *that's the one.*

"The music therapy we offer now extends to three hospitals. Our therapists have trolleys full of instruments and the play team and nursing staff identify the children who they think would benefit the most by having music therapy. It's very much child-led.

"The power of music is

quite extraordinary. We had a wonderful boy who hadn't been out of bed for about six months; no one could motivate him to do anything at all. The music therapist went in and sat by the bed, and the nurses heard this drumming. They came running to see what was going on, and the child was out

was desperate because there were things you can't say to your friends, that you need to say to qualified experts."

A friend put Carolyn in touch with bereavement counsellor Jenni Thomas OBE, who has over 45 years of experience. Jenni supported the Mayling family, and now

## "Music therapy gives the children a break in a day of medical procedures"

### Behind The Rainbow



**Rosie had a particular love of bright colours and often wore rainbow striped tights. At a celebration of her life following her funeral, Carolyn believes she was sent a special message.**

"I looked outside the theatre door and there's this massive double rainbow over the sky, and I thought, *that's it. It's Rosie's Rainbow,*" Carolyn recalls.

"We had a competition to design a logo for the charity. Her best friend Emma had the winning design, which was a rainbow with Rosie sitting on top. Her stripy tights were part of the rainbow.

"At Ellie's wedding I said, 'I wish Rosie would have been here to see her sister get married', " Carolyn says. "Everyone gasped and looked out of the window. There was a double rainbow over the hotel."

of bed playing the drums.

"[Music therapy] can reach children where the spoken word can't. It gives them a break in a day that's full of medical procedures and it's a time in the day when they can actually be in control."

In addition, the fund also provides parental support and bereavement counselling.

"After Rosie died, there was no support. We were sent out of hospital with a pile of paperwork about registering the death of a child. There was nothing about how to look after us, and how to support our older daughter, who was only 14," explains Carolyn.

"The need for proper support

provides services on behalf of Rosie's Rainbow Fund.

Nearly 20 years on from Rosie's death, Carolyn has written a memoir about the story behind the charity and her life since, including her breast cancer diagnosis and how at 54, she welcomed her much-loved son Dominic into the world through IVF.

"[Setting up the charity] really helped me to transfer my own grief and do something positive," says Carolyn. "I wouldn't say it made it better, but it gave me a purpose. I felt compelled to move through my own grief and try and make it better for other people." MW

**The Future Is Rosie, by Carolyn Mayling (Alliance Publishing Press) is available now on Amazon, RRP £11.99. For more information about Rosie's Rainbow Fund visit [rosiesrainbowfund.co.uk](http://rosiesrainbowfund.co.uk)**

