

Rotherhithe grotto is lit up to raise funds for young Jasmine

By Gavriel Hollander

gav@southwarknews.org

A ROTHERHITHE family has turned their house into a mini Santa's Grotto this Christmas to raise money for a local family's fight against their daughter's life-threatening illness.

Six-year-old Jasmine Harris suffers from an extremely rare genetic condition known as late infantile batten's disease. There is no known cure for the illness, which affects only 500 children around the world.

Jasmine's older brother Jordan lost his brave fight against batten's on Boxing Day last year, but parents Tina and Mark have continued to raise funds for the Jordan Jay Trust.

In five years they have raised a quarter of a million pounds to support research and trials into the condition, and now they are being lent a hand by Rotherhithe's famous

'Christmas House'.

Violet and Peter Thorpe's house on Rotherhithe Street has been transformed into a winter wonderland every Yuletide for two decades. The last eight years has seen them use it to raise cash for local causes, with residents making donations throughout the holiday period.

Last year, they raised money for COSMIC, the unit of a children's hospital that treated terminally ill Millwall fan Jordan Fisher. This time around, the Thorpes and their daughter Michelle are supporting the Jordan Jay Trust.

"Ever since Jordan was diagnosed, the local community has been fantastic," said Tina.

"There are so many good causes to support and it amazes us how generous people are.

"The trust has raised £250,000 and we haven't got any rich people donating. It's all from charity events like



this."

Peter, dressed as Father Christmas to switch on this year's display last week, said that the hard work he and his family put in is made worthwhile by children like Jasmine.

"It's like a full-time job at times," he said. "It takes about four weeks to set it up but it's worth every moment to see the children's faces."

The Harris family flew to China last week for a third time to take part in a trial of stem cell treatment for Jasmine's illness. She has also undergone gene therapy treatment in New York.

Although the expensive procedures have only slowed down the progression of the disease, the family is determined to keep fighting for

Jasmine.

"In medical terms both trials have been successful and a step in the right direction," added Tina. "Sadly we know that both the treatments in New York and Beijing are not the miracle cure we have been hoping for, but they are all there is right now. We will never stop trying to find something that might help Jasmine."

