

COMMUNITY NEWS

MUM OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER

Mum inspires others after tragedy

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A mother, who since the death of her son has campaigned tirelessly to raise awareness and improve medical practice around Group B Strep infection in the UK, has been announced as a Tesco Mum of the Year Awards winner.

Jane Plumb MBE, 55, from Lindfield, will be presented with her award in a star-studded ceremony at The Savoy Hotel in London on Sunday March 23.

Jane is no stranger to accolades and became an MBE in the 2012 New Years Honours and was a finalist in last years Mid Sussex Times Community Awards.

Her story was chosen from amongst thousands of nomi-

nations sent in to Tesco from all over the UK.

In 1996, Jane founded a charity called Group B Strep Support (GBSS), just four months after her son, Theo, died from the infection.

Testing for Group B Strep isn't available as part of routine ante-natal care in the UK. Group B Strep affects more children in the UK than Spina Bifida and yet few pregnant women have even heard of it.

Jane had a normal pregnancy, but Theo was born very prematurely.

Sadly he didn't respond well once he had been delivered at the Princess Royal in Haywards Heath. He was transferred to the Trevor Mann Baby Unit at The Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton, but died shortly afterwards.

Jane was later informed that his death had been caused by Group B Strep infection,

which women can pass on to their babies around birth. Jane said: "We had so many questions, like whether I could have another baby, but there was so little information about Group B Strep for parents then."

There was very little information for health professionals in the UK either."

Since her son's death in 1996, Jane has campaigned tirelessly to raise awareness and improve medical practice around Group B Strep in the UK.

Jane discovered that Group B Strep is present without any symptoms and without it causing any harm in up to 30 per cent of adults who carry it, but if it is present when a woman gives birth, it can cause serious infections such as septicemia, pneumonia and meningitis in the newborn.

Every year in the UK

around 500 babies become ill because of the infection and around 50 of them will die.

Over the past 17 years, Jane has dedicated her life to GBSS.

Her charity's efforts contributed to the first national guidelines being published on Group Strep B in 2003, a major achievement given that in 1996, when the charity was founded, Group B Strep wasn't on the agenda.

Jane, who is also mum to Oliver (21) and Camilla (15), regularly speaks at conferences to raise further awareness.

Jane said: "We get families saying, actually the information we got from you gave us the courage and helped us make the decision to have another baby."

Jane's story touched the hearts of the Tesco Mum of the Year Awards judging panel, including radio DJ Sara Cox, TV presenter Gabby Logan and Olympic gold medalist and TV personality Denise Lewis.



Tesco Mum of the Year. Jane Plumb, from Lindfield, managing her Group B Strep Support website - www.gbss.org.uk