

A Remarkable Young Achiever

Jeremy Miles meets Adam Tuffrey, a Bournemouth boy who is helping other meningitis survivors through his fund-raising concerts



He's a brilliant young musician and a talented cricket player; a 16-year-old buzzing with enthusiasm and glowing with health. Yet as a young child Adam Tuffrey came within a whisker of death. He was just six years old when he collapsed with meningitis and was rushed to hospital giving his parents, Duncan and Trudi, the toughest imaginable lesson on how devastating this terrible disease can be. "We felt so helpless. We seriously believed we might lose him. It was heartbreaking."

For Adam, his memories are much hazier. "I remember hallucinating. I was in a children's ward and there were exotic animals painted around the walls. I was terrified because I thought they were attacking me. I also remember all these faces looking down on me with masks on. It was pretty horrible."

Meningitis affects the membrane surrounding the brain and spinal cord and carries a very real risk of septicemia that can kill within hours. In Adam's case it started with painful joints and a high temperature. Initially doctors diagnosed a virus and prescribed painkillers. Within hours he had a raging headache and a rash had appeared on his legs. This time the medics called an ambulance.

Even though he was in hospital for eleven days and for a time could barely walk, Adam made a full recovery. Others don't. Meningitis survivors can suffer a range of medical complications and after-effects ranging from personality changes to limb loss. Adam himself went through a period of uncertainty and lack of confidence. This insider knowledge is one of the reasons Adam has devoted so much of his spare time to helping raise awareness of meningitis.

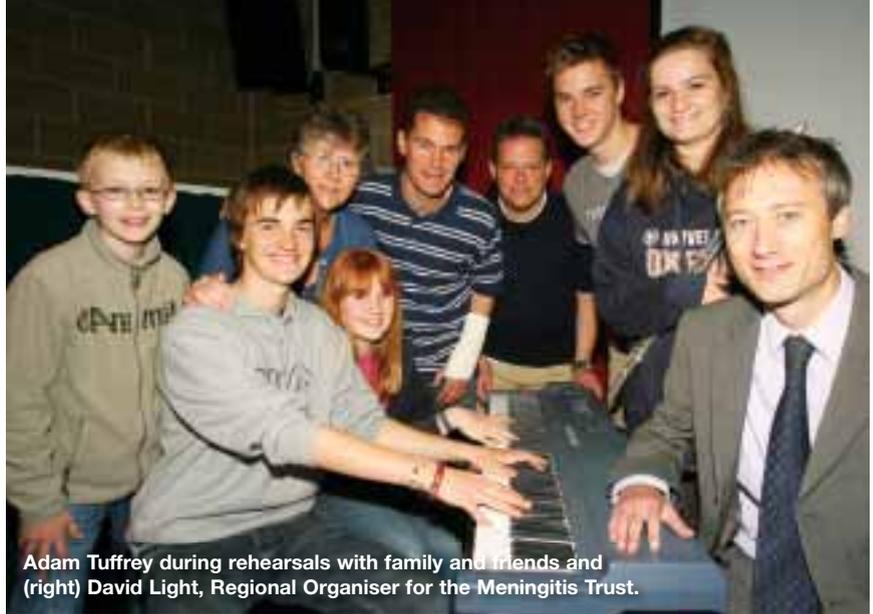
First there were sponsored cycle rides but more recently a series of shows have raised nearly £9,000 for the Meningitis Trust. The biggest so far, a variety concert staged at the De La Salle Theatre at St Peter's Upper School in Bournemouth last

year, raised more than £4,000. In 2009 Adam won a Bournemouth Young Achiever Award for his fundraising work.

Featuring Adam on keyboards and vocals, Dave Shattock from the Dorset band Lemongrove and comedian Andy Kind, the production was a sell-out. David Light, Regional Coordinator for the Meningitis Trust, was delighted by Adam's sterling efforts. "For a meningitis survivor who suffered confidence issues, to go on to achieve something like this is truly remarkable."

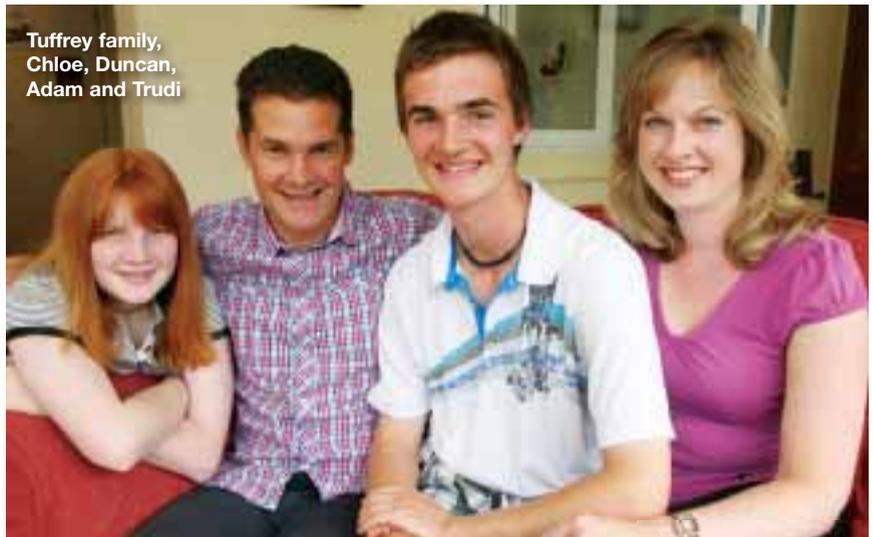
Having taken a break for his GCSEs, Adam's now planning his biggest fundraiser yet at Bournemouth International Centre on October 8 which he says will be "the biggest and the best so far." Called Music 4 Meningitis, the concert marks the 25th anniversary of the Meningitis Trust. Adam will be joined on stage by other Dorset entertainers including the Swing Unlimited Big Band and the Stage Door School of Dancing.

Adam admits that he gets a real buzz out of organising the charity concerts, from the initial discussions with the Meningitis Trust management to the marketing and distribution of tickets. It also gives him an opportunity to play in front of a live audience. "It's an extraordinary feeling. The fact that I can



Adam Tuffrey during rehearsals with family and friends and (right) David Light, Regional Organiser for the Meningitis Trust.

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Tuffrey family, Chloe, Duncan, Adam and Trudi

The variety concert staged at the De La Salle Theatre last year, raised more than £4,000



do that and help other people at the same time is really important to me."

This year he has one major goal, to celebrate the Meningitis Trust's 25th anniversary by boosting his fundraising total beyond the £25,000 mark. Adam, who has also been learning the guitar, is an accomplished musician. He passed his Grade 5 piano at 11-years-old and, though he later abandoned grades in pursuit of more jazz and blues orientated interests, he now teaches keyboards to his own small group of students.

So does he want to become a professional musician? Adam considers the question for a moment before replying with a grin: "Well, if I fail to play international cricket, then I guess being a musician wouldn't be a bad back-up plan!" Music 4 Meningitis is at the Bournemouth International Centre's Tregonwell Hall on Saturday October 8. Tickets are £12.50. Call 0844 576 3000

MENINGITIS FACTS

Meningitis is inflammation of the meninges - the linings that surround and protect the brain. Symptoms can include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting and muscle pain. Hands and feet may feel cold and the patient often has an aversion to bright lights. A crucial sign is a rash that doesn't fade under pressure (try pushing the bottom of a glass on the affected area). Symptoms can appear in any order and some may not appear at all. If in doubt get help. For more information contact the Meningitis Trust's nurse-led helpline on 0800 028 1828 or visit meningitis-trust.org

