



Brave Sam's legacy to ease family pain

LAUREN NOVAK

WHEN little Sam Roberts died three years ago from a rare neurological disease, his parents resolved to make it easier for other families to be closer to their terminally-ill children.

Today, on what would have been Sam's eighth birthday, Marty and Michelle Roberts will open the Sam Roberts Family Unit at the Women's and Children's Hospital.

They have raised more than \$100,000 for palliative care at the

hospital and have created a one-of-a-kind room where families can be with their sick children in their final few days together.

The couple set up the Sam Roberts Family Fund seven months after Sam's death in April, 2005, from Niemann-Pick disease Type C, which caused cholesterol to accumulate in his lungs and brain.

"It's very symbolic being (opened) on Sam's birthday," Mr

Roberts said. "We're not the only ones who've been through

this and there will be many more.

"(The unit) will make those last few days with their child as precious and comfortable as possible."

In Sam's 22-month stay in hospital, his parents and siblings, Lucy, 10, and Charlie, 6, crowded into a small room, bringing bean bags, a small TV and other home comforts with them.

In the new unit there is a kitchenette, sofa bed and entertainment system for families, with a door to

the child's room.

"If something like

this had been available to us we would have loved it," Mrs Roberts said.

The fund contributes to the Women's and Children's Hospital Foundation.

By completing a 1100km Cycle 4 Sam ride around SA in October, the family plans to raise money for a hospital art therapist and medical equipment for patients cared for at home.



TOGETHER: Marty and Michelle Roberts in the new unit with Charlie and Lucy yesterday.

Picture: JO-ANNA ROBINSON



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INSPIRATION: Sam Roberts as a toddler. He died from a rare brain disease