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HEADLINE: Wheelchair boost for brave Thomas

BODY:

A YOUNG boy who suffers from a genetic disorder has been given a new wheelchair to help him get out and about.

Thomas Bartlett 12 of Westbury has Angelman syndrome ' a condition leaving him unable to walk or talk.

The new powered wheelchair was given to him by the Mobility Appliance Technique Society which raised £ 5 000 through a charity golf tournament.

Thomas' mum Marie Bartlett said: "He loves to go out but it was getting increasingly more difficult with his manual chair.

"We live on a hill and even doing things like going to the park meant we had to take the car.

"With the new powered wheel chair we've already been to a National Trust wetland park and up to the Malvern Hills where we were able to go off track."

Thomas who attends Larkrise School was diagnosed with Angelman syndrome when he was three after doctors first assumed he had cerebral palsy.

The illness is caused by a deleted chromosome and symptoms include learning difficulties movement problems epilepsy and a happy disposition. There are often no symptoms when the child is born.

Mrs Bartlett said: "We only knew something was wrong because he was failing all his baby tests.

"Although he can't walk he is quite mobile but he has no sense of danger so needs constant supervision. He also loves the water which is another symptom of Angelman syndrome. Everyday life can be difficult but he is such a lovely child you just get on with it."

Although the condition is rare experts believe there are more children suffering from Angelman syndrome who have been wrongly diagnosed.

Mats chairman Alan Jones a prison officer from Hunters Chase Westbury has been involved with the charity for 10 years.

In his three years as chairman he has organised annual charity golf tournaments for local businesses and prison officers around the country.

He said: "It ranges from £ 3-7000 to buy a new wheelchair. This year's event was held for the second time at Orchard Golf Club and we raised over £ 5000 to buy a wheelchair for Thomas."

The first wheelchair bought with money raised at a golf day was given to 10-year-old Charlie Stubbs of Leigh Park.

He suffers from Ataxia Telangiectasia a genetic disorder affecting the immune system.