270 Abseil from King Alfreds Tower to Fund Primary School Classrooms in South Africa

Tuesday 17 October, 2023

Last weekend 270 fearless fundraisers successfully completed SOS Africa's latest abseil challenge from King Alfred's Tower and raised a remarkable £41,000 to fund the purchase of 2 brand new primary school classrooms in the Western Cape, South Africa. Standing at an impressive 160ft with over 200 steps, 1.2 million bricks and spectacular views across 3 different counties, it was set to be the highest abseil challenge organised by the charity to date.

Subsequent to the launch of the much-anticipated fundraising event in April 2023, it quickly became clear that the scale of the challenge would not deter the charity's brave followers as a steady stream of enthusiastic recruits from schools, businesses and community groups across the South-West signed up over the months which ensued. Recruitment for the event was also greatly assisted by the popularity of this iconic National Trust owned landmark which can been seen and admired from far and wide.

The opening day of the event was blessed by a UK heatwave and as temperatures soared, the crowds gathered to bask in the sunshine and support their daring friends and family members. The first to complete the 160ft drop was courageous Phil, Manager of Stourhead, National Trust and his daughter Grace. Both completed the challenge with excitement and bravery, setting the tone for the days ahead. And as the subsequent abseilers followed closely in their footsteps, they were greeted by messages of encouragement from the SOS Africa children as they climbed to tower steps.

Each day of the event was blessed with so many inspirational stories of abseilers young and old often dressed as their favourite historical heroes, conquering their fears to help improve the circumstances of disadvantaged children from the far side of the world. It was impossible not to be in awe of the courage of our youngest participants, Archie, Pippa, Dulcie, Lois and Jasper who all landed safely to standing ovations from large appreciative crowds.

In between the 2 weekends it seemed that the UK experienced a complete change of season. As a consequence, much of the 2nd weekend was spent dodging torrential downpours and avoiding lightning storms. This, however, did not dampen the spirits of our instructors (photographed below) or indeed our abseilers who displayed admirable determination when fighting the elements!

Reflecting on both weekends, it has been unanimously agreed that one of the moments which will be sure to live long in our collective memories was when 11-year-old Archie (who raised over £600) touched down at the base of the tower just as the fundraising total passed the £40,000 target. In acknowledgement of his efforts, Archie was given the honour of updating our 'fundraising giraffe' to the great appreciation of the large crowd. When asked about his experiences of the day Archie replied: *"It was a life-changing experience, that I will remember for the rest of my life!"*

And by the time the final abseiler touched safely down, the event had raised over £41,000 thanks to more than 2000 sponsors from across the globe. Because of their generosity, SOS Africa will now be able to purchase 2 primary school classrooms for partnering school Grabouw Primary which will provide vital education and care to 60 children each year from January 2024.

Top individual fundraiser Clem Cavoli: *"My heartfelt gratitude to the entire team for orchestrating this remarkable day. From the warm meet and greet, to Matt's unwavering support as he guided each team to the summit of King Alfred's Tower, and to the caring abseiling team who provided reassurance when my legs were ready to give in. I would like to express my deep appreciation to the generous donors, and last but not least, a heartfelt thank you to all the SOS Africa children who were with us in spirit, inspiring me to conquer my fear of heights."*

Event organiser, Matt Crowcombe: *"Congratulations to all our abseilers and a sincere thanks to their philanthropic sponsors! Special mention should be made to our top fundraising team Emma, Graham, Gordon and Tony from the 'Phoenix Flyers' who raised over £1,700 and our top individual fundraiser Clem Cavoli who singlehandedly raised £850!"*

A big thank you also to Ian and his wonderful team from Aardvark Endeavours, Photographer Richard and SOS Africa volunteers Ann, Dave, Jon, Lottie, Kim, Simon, Dickon, Gavin and Sandra. Last but certainly not least, a big thank you to Philip Niemand from the National Trust; without your faith and unlimited support, this event would not have been possible. We are delighted that a proportion of the

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