Man to swim 21 miles the equivalent of the English Channel in a swimming pool over 30 days to raise money for Francis House Children's Hospice

Thursday 16 May, 2024

An assistant café bar manager is taking the plunge in a swimming challenge covering the equivalent distance of swimming the English Channel in a pool at his local gym in Altrincham.

Nick Jamieson-Jones works at Oppio Lounge and will be swimming 45 laps of the 25 metre pool every day throughout the month of June at Total Fitness to cover 21 miles – the narrowest point of the English channel – to raise funds for Francis House Children's Hospice.

The initiative is part of 'LoungeAid' an annual fundraising event organised by Lounge all-day café bar sites across the UK and Nick wanted to do something big with the aim of raising £1,000.

Nick, 36, a former professional dancer became a regular at the gym after hanging up his dance shoes in 2019. Nick chose the gym for its pool but had never used it. It was only after spotting the Swim 21 challenge on the noticeboard that he decided it was the perfect fundraising activity and one he could combine with working full-time.

In preparation for his 30 day challenge Nick has been swimming two or three times a week before or after work.

> Nick said: "I swam when I was very young, but I stopped in my early teens and never really got back to it. It is taking me just over an hour to swim 45 lengths.
>
> "I'm not in any rush. I'm just in the slow lane doing the breaststroke swimming along nice and chilled listening to a playlist of more than 800 songs with my waterproof headphones on.
>
> "I get into work after a swim, and I feel wide awake. My colleagues have noticed it and it's already proving beneficial. I wasn't expecting that, I genuinely thought I'd be more tired but at the same time it's for such a good cause."

From its base in Didsbury, Francis House Children's Hospice supports more than 600 families from across Greater Manchester, providing a range of services including respite care, homecare, sibling support, end of life care and bereavement support to children and young adults with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions.

A visit to the hospice on an open day further inspired Nick to raise as much money as possible.

> Nick said: "I was taken on a tour of the hospice by one of the care team. I already had some basic idea of what a hospice does in terms of bereavement but when I walked through the kitchen dining area I was amazed, it was so open and much bigger than I thought it would be.
>
> "Francis House calls itself a home from home, and Lounges calls itself a lounge away from home. Seeing inside Francis House and how it's not at all like a hospital, all the equipment is hidden away and that it's a place for all the family to relax really motivated me.
>
> "Of course, I felt quite emotional when I saw the rainbow rooms – the cooled rooms that the child can go after they have died where the family can spend as much time with them as they need – that choked me up a bit. I want to do as much as I possibly can for Francis House."

The target for LoungeAid is £500 for each Lounge but Nick's goal at Oppio Lounge in Altrincham is to raise £1,000.

James Ferguson, Fundraising Assistant of Francis House said: "I'd like to thank Nick for his amazing support for Francis House. Swimming the equivalent of the English Channel is no easy feat and will require plenty of motivation and determination to achieve, which I'm sure he has.

"We have worked with Oppio Lounge since their establishment, and their continued desire to help Francis House has been fantastic, strengthening our mission in providing care for children and young adults with life-limiting conditions. Nick's fundraising during LoungeAid will contribute towards the care

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and support that we offer at Francis House, ensuring that hundreds of families can continue to rely on us during their times of need."

As the local community manager, it's Nick's job to involve the community in the charity events. To help raise funds there are notice boards on the bar with links to Nick's JustGiving page and there will be games to play in house.

Oppio Lounge opened in April 2023, at the site of the former Bistrot Pierre on George Street.

Nick said: "We have a tight knit community at the Lounges and regular customers. You can come to a Lounge with your laptop and have a cup of coffee and work or just read a book, meet friends and have cocktails or come with your kids and have breakfast. It's all about coming here to enjoy yourself and treat it like your home."

Nick officially begins his swim on June 1 but has already seen donations swell to into the hundreds of pounds.

Nick has no desire to swim the English Channel for real with a lifelong phobia of fishes.

> He added: "I'm terrified of the sea. That's why I'm doing the equivalent miles in a pool. I'm not sure why, fishes freak me out I don't even eat them. For me, the beach is the worse thing ever. I don't think I could survive on a cruise ship either!"

To make a donation and support Nick in his challenge visit
https://www.justgiving.com/page/nicholas-jamieson-jones-1712618587493

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