NHS workers battle the mud to raise funds for Francis House Children's Hospice

Wednesday 29 June, 2022

A group of healthcare professionals from Oldham in Greater Manchester took on a 10 kilometre assault course and raised £1,680 for Francis House Children's Hospice.

Swapping their scrubs for bandanas and shorts, the band of NHS workers, including respiratory doctors and advanced practitioners from the Royal Oldham Hospital, entered the mud-fuelled Born Survivor challenge at Capesthorne Hall in Cheshire.

Racing around the commando inspired obstacle course, they completed their gruelling mission in under three and a half hours.

Consultant chest physician Georges Ng Man Kwong, from Stockport, suggested Francis House as the charity to benefit from their efforts and the challenge was organised by Laura Ahearn an Advanced Practitioner.

Georges said: "Like all good challenges this started with the idea of undertaking a team event. We called ourselves Oldham Bronchomania relating to our clinical speciality - the lung and airways - and we proudly displayed our name on our T-shirts."

NHS key workers

The team of fifteen NHS workers, including Rick McEvoy-Crompton, a theatrical visual effects lecturer, represented respiratory care as part of the Northern Care Alliance in Greater Manchester.

Georges explained: "We felt that we needed an opportunity to do something as a team to acknowledge and commemorate the NHS achievements in responding to the Covid pandemic which has had a major impact on the emotional well-being of NHS staff and key workers, as well as the whole nation, over the past 2 years,

> "We pride ourselves in having strong team values, providing a safe space for our members and a shared vision - supplemented by coffee and donuts each Friday."

Overcoming obstacles

Committed to working together to achieve goals beyond any individual's ability the team battled 35 obstacles on the course designed by the Royal Marine Commandos.

Georges added: "We felt a range of emotions and feelings that day. Anxiety, fear, pain, excitement and later happiness, elation and exhilaration.

"The most memorable obstacle was a caged water tunnel which involved floating and pulling yourself along a tunnel with only inches of clearance between the cage and the muddy murky water level. That was truly immersive in many ways."

The group discovered the final and hardest part of the challenge was tackling the Blitz - a 10 ft steep climb with 5 ft vertical board and no footholds.

> "We were both mentally and physically drained of energy," said Georges. "It required a team effort to overcome with some of our most determined members trying multiple times and showing true grit and determination to not give up. Our team motto at work - applied during the Covid pandemic response and on the day - is 'no one has all of the answers, that's why we are a team'."

The group plan to undertake an equally muddy and gruelling challenge next year and are considering a long distance walk or even the Yorkshire Three Peaks.

"I have been supporting Francis House for some years and last year with colleagues from work we ran the Great Manchester Run half marathon to raise funds. It was an obvious choice to support Francis House again and very much welcomed by the team. This event has certainly created a buzz with others

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wanting to join in next time," added Georges.

Francis House provides respite care to children and young people with life-limiting conditions and support for their family members. Based in Didsbury, the hospice supports more than 600 families from across Greater Manchester and needs £12,900 a day to keep its services running.

The hospice is organising a number of challenge events including a zip wire, STEPtember and golf week. Anyone wanting to take part in a fundraising activity for Francis House can find out more by visiting the hospice website.

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