To the South Pole and back - without leaving Cumbria

Tuesday 16 July, 2024

Staff from Cumbrian businesses have walked the equivalent of the distance from Cumbria to the South Pole and back, as part of a charity challenge in aid of local good causes.

More than 130 colleagues from 18 companies and organisations signed up for Cumbria Community Foundation's Virtual Coast to Coast Challenge, clocking up an incredible 19,882 miles in six weeks.

Participants tackled the 171-mile virtual route from St Bees to Robin Hood's Bay by walking, running and swimming all over the county and beyond, as well as on static exercise bikes and rowing machines in their homes, offices and gyms.

The challenge, organised by Cumbria Community Foundation to mark its 25th anniversary, raised more than £12,500. All the money raised will be distributed by the Foundation through grant making to a wide range of charities and community groups across the county.

Companies taking part included Armstrong Watson, Oxley Developments and Intro PR (full list in notes below). Beneficiaries of Cumbria Community Foundation also joined in, including the Centre for Leadership Performance, Phoenix Enterprise Centre and Calderwood House.

Participants had six weeks to complete the challenge but some powered through the miles in half that time.

A team from WCF was the first to finish, and the firm also took individual first place too, with Deputy Managing Director Phil Murray completing the challenge in less than three weeks.

The team – known as WCF Warriors and made up of members of the firm's senior leadership team, plus one family member – also raised the highest total, thanks to a match funding donation from the firm.

Managing Director Jo Ritzema said: "As long-standing supporters of Cumbria Community Foundation, we were delighted to support the charity in their silver anniversary year by doing something a bit different.

"Our senior leadership team already had its own group on Strava, so taking part in the Virtual Coast to Coast Challenge was the perfect fit for us.

"We have all thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the Virtual Coast to Coast Challenge and have benefitted from both the physical and mental effort. By doing it as a team, we have been spurred on by the efforts of others, particularly on dull and rainy days, and there is no doubt there has been a healthy level of competition to top the leaderboard.

"Our colleagues at WCF have encouraged us with their kind words and donations and we are very grateful for the generosity of everyone who sponsored us. We are also grateful that WCF has match funded what we raised with its own contribution."

The challenge was created to be as inclusive as possible for people of all abilities.

Heather Sewell, Communications Manager for Cumbria Tourism, took part with a team of her colleagues. She said: "As someone who was born with a complex heart condition, the strenuous uphill nature of the 'real' Coast to Coast route wouldn't be suitable for me.

"This virtual version was still undoubtedly a big challenge, so I was thrilled to complete the 171-mile course within the six weeks. It's been a great incentive for me to get out and about across the county, with all the physical and mental health benefits that brings."

Caroline Adams, Development Manager for Cumbria Community Foundation, said: "We were absolutely delighted with the way so many people rose to the challenge and took part to support the work of the Foundation.

"We wanted to do something special to mark our 25th anniversary and this challenge has certainly given us many memorable moments, as well as raising very valuable funds for communities in need across the county."

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As well as organising the challenge, a team from Cumbria Community Foundation also took part.

Caroline added: “We have really enjoyed going for walks in our lunch break – despite the largely terrible weather – and even set up an exercise bike in one of our meeting rooms, so hopefully we will keep up our good habits now the challenge has finished.”

A celebration event was held last night [Monday 15.07.24] at North Lakes Hotel in Penrith to bring participants together to thank them and share stories of their efforts to complete the challenge.

Thanks to the following who kindly provided prizes and goody bags: Asda Workington; New Balance, Flimby; Cranstons; Grasmere Gingerbread and Wild & Fruitful.

To find out more ways to support Cumbria Community Foundation, visit https://www.cumbriafoundation.org.

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