TOP VEGAN MARATHONER TAKES ON THE NORTH POLE TO SAVE ANIMALS

Monday 25 March, 2013

Amateur athlete and vegan Fiona Oakes, 43, from Asheldham in Essex, is set to take on the northernmost marathon on earth in temperatures averaging between -30 and -40 degrees, the North Pole Marathon, on 9 April. Fiona is facing this extreme challenge to raise funds for the The Vegan Society and to support the 400 animals that she personally cares for every day at her Tower Hill Stables Animal Sanctuary.

Fiona, an Honorary Patron of the Vegan Society, has competed in more than 26 marathons. She has gained top 20 places overall in two of the world's Major Marathon Series - Berlin and London - as well as the Great North Run where she was the first woman to complete the race from the masses in 2010. Fiona has an impressive list of other Marathon results in first tier Marathons such as making the top 10 overall in Amsterdam, Florence, Nottingham and Moscow. She has victories in four Marathons both at home and abroad – all of which were won in course records which still stand. Last April she became the first vegan woman - and one of a tiny number of women ever - to complete the grueling Marathon de Sables, often described as 'the toughest race on earth'. The race involves competitors running seven marathons in six days – at total of 154 miles - across the Sahara Desert in Morocco carrying all their own supplies for the week with only temporary shelter and water provided. Temperatures often reach in excess of 45 degrees.

What makes Fiona's achievement even more impressive is that she has achieved such success despite having a severe injury to her left knee, incurred when she was a teenager that left her with no knee cap. When she runs she is in constant pain due to the running style she has to adopt. After her operations she was told that walking normally would be difficult and running near impossible.

Fiona is currently involved in an intensive training schedule to prepare for the North Pole Marathon. Fiona rises at 3.30am every day to feed and care for the 22 dogs, 53 horses, 82 pigs, 50 cats, 40 sheep, 20 goats, three cows and assorted chickens, geese, ducks and peacocks before pulling on her trainers up to 3 times a day to train for the marathon. She is tucked up in bed by 9.30pm and says that the Sanctuary takes every spare moment of her life and every single penny both she and her partner - who works in the financial sector – can earn. The Sanctuary needs at least £10,000 a month to pay for feed, bedding, veterinary bills and maintenance.

Fiona aims to be the first vegan to run a marathon on all seven continents plus the polar ice cap: "It is something only a handful of people have achieved and very few women. I have complete, one hundred per cent faith that my diet will give me everything that my body needs to perform well. It has never let me down in the past and I have been vegan since I was six years old. When I'm at a race, people are quite surprised that I can do what I do on a vegan diet. I always produce a good run, no matter what."

Fiona Oakes is well on her way to her seven continents target: in November she will take on the Volcano Marathon in the Atacama Desert the week before tackling the Antarctic Marathon, all in aid of the same charities.

Fiona's training schedule can be followed on her Facebook page http://www.facebook.com. To sponsor Fiona in aid of the Vegan Society visit http://www.justgiving.com/The-Vegan-Society or to help Tower Hill Stables Animal Sanctuary visit http://www.fionaoakes.com/northpolemarathon.html. Every penny raised will be going directly to Fiona's charities.

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For more information or to arrange to interview Fiona Oakes please contact Sam Calvert at media@vegansociety.com/01782 505430 / 07967 042050.

Note to editors
The Vegan Society is a registered educational charity (no. 279228) that provides information and guidance on various aspects of veganism, including to new and potential vegans, caterers, healthcare professionals, educators and the media. Visit www.vegansociety.com for more information.

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