Virtual balloon race to raise money for Francis House Children's Hospice

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A children's hospice in Didsbury, Manchester, is inviting people to take part in an online balloon race to raise much-needed funds.

Francis House Children's Hospice has teamed up with Purepages Group in Manchester to offer a 100% eco-friendly way to raise money during the current Coronavirus crisis.

Mike Phillips, Managing Director of Ecoracing.co, explained: "It's a seven-day computer simulation race where everything is real except for the balloon. It's a fun and easy way to raise funds for a fantastic cause and has no negative environmental impact on wildlife, plastic waste or litter."

Software using live weather data determines the progress of each balloon. Once launched each entry can be tracked on Google Maps and Satellites.

The race starts on September 14, and virtual balloons cost £3, with the money raised going towards providing hospice care to the families of children with life-limiting conditions.

"You can personalise your balloon by giving it a name, choosing a colour, shape and pattern and selecting different features, such as weight and helium content, which will determine its flight performance, and can enhance your chances of winning," added Mike.

With the cancellation of fundraising events including ladies' lunches, group walking and running challenges and the annual gala fundraising ball, the hospice is facing a shortfall in income of £250,000.

Susie Poppitt, event co-ordinator at Francis House said: "Faced with a considerable loss of income due to the impact of the pandemic on our actual events, we have turned to virtual events as an exciting new way to raise money, and the balloon race will help ensure our fundraising efforts continue."

"We really hope people will support Francis House in this 'School's Back' virtual balloon race, which promises to be a fantastic event that can be enjoyed by children and adults alike."

"Not only will you be helping us raise vital funds for Francis House, but you'll have all the excitement of racing your virtual balloon to win some fantastic prizes at the same time."

The race, titled, 'School's Back' to coincide with the end of the summer break, will set off from Red Square, Moscow on September 14 at 12.00 noon.

First prize, for the balloon that travels the farthest is £500 cash, second prize is an Apple iPad, and there will also be 10 lucky winners of £10 book tokens.

To buy a balloon visit www.francishouse.org.uk/balloonrace

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