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Newcastle Building Society Staff Stepping Out For Air Ambulance

More than 200 staff from the North East's largest building society are set to put their best feet forward next month, in the name of fundraising for a leading local charity.

Family, friends and even pets will join the Newcastle Building Society staff on Saturday 26 September for a walk through the countryside around the Society's offices at Cobalt Business Park in North Tyneside.

The walk is being organised to raise money for the Society's dedicated charity, which this year is the Great North Air Ambulance Service (GNAAS).

And various other attractions are planned for the day, including face painters, tile making, exotic animal handling, a nature trail and willow weaving, making the event a real family occasion. A student art sale will also take place providing people, including non-sponsored walk participants, the opportunity to buy original artwork produced by local student artists, a donation from which goes to the chosen charity.

It's the second time that the Newcastle has organised a fundraising sponsored walk, with more than £2,500 being raised at last year's event for the Maggie's North East Cancer Caring Centre appeal.

More than £10,000 has already been raised by the Newcastle and its staff in just three months since the GNAAS was adopted as its dedicated charity for the 2009/10, and a range of other staff fundraising events are already in the pipeline.

The Great North Air Ambulance Service provides a seven days a week, ten hours a day service, and has three helicopters covering an area of 7,000 square miles and serving 3.5 million people.

It aims to provide the people of North East England, North Yorkshire and Cumbria with the best quality care available, and its helicopters are vital in the transportation of critically injured or ill patients to the best possible hospitals, which is not always the nearest one to the site of an incident.

GNAAS receives no government or lottery funding and relies solely on the continued generosity of the public and the success of its sideline operations, such as its successful weekly lottery draw.

Gillian Tiplady, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility at Newcastle Building Society, says: "Our first sponsored walk was such an enjoyable and successful event that we naturally wanted to repeat it, and we've had a brilliant response from lots of staff members who want to take part again, or to join in the fun for the first time.

"The momentum's been building really quickly around our fundraising work for the Air Ambulance Service, and everyone's already looking forward to another great day out."

The fundraising for the GNAAS is taking place alongside the Newcastle's existing work with the Community Foundation, through which it has donated more than £600,000 to over 600 good causes across Tyne & Wear and Northumberland since 1997, and other initiatives including Macmillan, Children in Need and Comic Relief.

Friends of the Society can also take part in the walk and should register via a member of staff by 17 September - for more information, please email csr@newcastle.co.uk or contact those named below.

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