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AIR AMBULANCE IS UP, UP AND AWAY WITH £24,500 DONATION FROM THE NEWCASTLE

Newcastle Building Society staff have wrapped up a year-long fundraising effort by presenting a cheque for more than £24,500 to the Great North Air Ambulance Service (GNAAS).

GNAAS was chosen by Society staff in April 2009 to be their dedicated charity for the year, with a wide range of sponsored activities happening over the last 12 months. The events were organised by individual employees, teams and departments at the Newcastle's head offices and 35 branches.

Fundraising events have included raffles, cake bakes, dress down days, a family fun day, a sponsored walk and a Summer Ball at the NewcastleGateshead Hilton, which was attended by business leaders from across the North East.

The Society also donated 10p from every online vote received for its recent AGM, at which the cheque for £24,770 was donated, beating the original target of £18,000. The cheque was presented to GNAAS by Michelle Paterson, a member of the Society's Corporate and Social Responsibility (CSR) team.

Gillian Tiplady, Head of CSR at Newcastle Building Society, says: "It's been a brilliant effort by everyone involved to raise so much more than we aimed to. It's a hugely deserving cause and we're extremely pleased to be able to make such a substantial contribution to GNAAS' enormously valuable work."

The donation will pay for the charity's Durham Tees Valley airport fees for the year.

GNNAS provides a seven-days-a-week, ten-hours-a-day service, and has a fleet of 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.

Janet Hume, at the Great North Air Ambulance Service, adds: "We are extremely grateful to all the staff at Newcastle Building Society for all their efforts throughout the year to raise such a fantastic amount, it is most appreciated.

The fundraising for its dedicated charity takes place alongside the Newcastle's ongoing work with the Community Foundation, through which it has donated more than £800,000 to over 800 good causes across Tyne & Wear and Northumberland since 1997, and other initiatives including Macmillan, Children in Need and Comic Relief.

A new dedicated charity for 2010/11 will be announced by the Newcastle in the next few weeks.

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