

# Lynne McNicoll talks about her fundraising Kilimanjaro trek



A grandmother of two from Edinburgh has raised thousands of pounds for children with cancer after scaling Kilimanjaro last month.

Lynne McNicoll, 56, and her team of 30 volunteers, raised over £120,000 for local charity '[It's Good 2 Give](#).' The charity, which Lynne founded in 2010, has already raised over £400,000 for local young people with cancer and their families.

Lynne, who had previously worked in administration for most of her life, only began fundraising for charity on the run up to her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. She said:- "I knew I didn't need presents, so I thought, what could I do that's different? I'm going to raise money for charity."

As her husband had suffered from cancer two years before, they decided to look into fundraising for cancer charities, but for young people. She said:- "We read about Teenage Cancer Trust and I said 'I'm going to raise £5,000'. But my husband said 'You can do better than that! Why don't you do £1000 for each year of your life?' And so my £50,000 challenge was born."

Over the next three years, Lynne raised over £650,000 for Teenage Cancer Trust, and was awarded Volunteer Fundraiser of the Year in 2009. After setting up 'It's Good 2 Give' in 2010, and having previously trekked across both the Sahara and the Himalayas, Kilimanjaro was her most difficult challenge yet.

The Kilimanjaro team was comprised of 31 trekkers: 28 women and three men. Of this group, four of the trekkers were

parents of young cancer patients, two were related to young people who died from cancer, one was a former young cancer patient herself and a nurse from the local childrens' oncology ward also volunteered.

❌ 24 out of the 31 who trekked (unfortunately not including Lynne) made it all the way to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro. Describing herself as the 'granny of the group', McNicoll said:- "It was horrific. The air, it's so light on oxygen. I saw things. I thought I saw cows, and I definitely saw butterflies, and a black cat. And there's none of that up there."

"Lots of us felt like that. One girl was really sick. She was literally just throwing up at the side of the path and keeping on walking. I don't know how she did it."

The second day of the trek was particularly tough. McNicoll said:- "It was literally climbing, not walking. We were having to walk along little ledges, and hold onto stuff, and I thought 'I didn't expect this!' There were moments when I thought, what I would do to just curl up in a corner and have somebody just come and get me."

One of the group broke her leg during the trek and came back on crutches which meant time spent in the local hospital, and time spent on insurance matters to get her back home. So it was clearly not all plain sailing.

Louise Caithness, Director of Zest Skin Spa, was one of the 24 who made it to the summit. Louise said:- "Summit day was by far the toughest yet proudest day of my entire life and made me think about the tough challenges faced by our young cancer patients and their families. No matter how hard it was for me, it was nothing like chemotherapy. I repeated this mantra in my head until I reached the very top."

❌ One of the only men in the team, Graham Lawson, has a 6 year-old daughter who was diagnosed with leukaemia just

before Christmas 2011. Lawson said:- “Kilimanjaro was hard – but pales into insignificance when compared to the mountain that children with cancer have to face. My daughter has another 6 months of chemotherapy to go, and she inspired my every step to the top.”

Fiona Bruce, a Staff Nurse working in Edinburgh’s Sick Kids Oncology Ward, also made it to the summit. She said: “On summit day, walking in the dark, following all the little lights in the distance made me think about all the children we have lost and reminded me why we were doing it.”

It’s Good 2 Give has recently begun working with Breaking Strain events for their physical challenges. They are taking part in their first ever 5k run, ‘The Red-Faced Run’, sometime in 2014, as well as their annual [Pedal 4 Paul](#) bike ride. Another overseas challenge is also set for 2015.

McNicoll said that, by the end of the climb, the team had all become much closer as a result of some of the more gruesome aspects of the trip, but wasn’t giving too much away. Lynne and her team are standing by their Kilimanjaro mantra. “What goes on trek, stays on trek!” said McNicoll.