

Edinburgh knitathon

Direct

Aid



Knitting groups – in cafes, libraries, on-line – are multiplying these days, as the therapeutic and creative value of knitting, and broader ranges of wools and patterns, are appreciated by young and old of both sexes. But could they knit for 24 hours with only a 5 min break each hour?

Edinburgh Direct Aid is challenging knitters to raise sponsorship funds by doing exactly that (individually or in teams) in the weekend of 15 and 16 November – just in time to complete all those Christmas presents, or half-finished projects. This is in memory of their well-loved supporter Sister Margaret Duncan who completed this test of endurance on her own on 16th November 2009, at the age of 92, raising an extraordinary £12,000 for the disadvantaged children in Bosnia.

The Lord Provost, the Rt Hon Donald Wilson, said he hoped the challenge would encourage those who might not normally fundraise to give it a go. He said: “The ‘knitathon’ charity challenge is a great idea and I really do hope that the event raises awareness and understanding of what Direct Aid does. While bungee jumps and marathons are fantastic fundraising challenges for those looking for an adrenaline rush or to raise their fitness, for many people such physical challenges are not an option. Non-stop crafting is something many older and novice knitters might like to challenge themselves to do, alone or with friends, in order to raise money for a good cause.”

To find out more, take part, or sponsor a knitter, see www.edinburghdirectaid.org.

Edinburgh Direct Aid is a registered Scottish charity founded in 1992 originally to bring humanitarian aid to victims of the war in Bosnia by driving convoys of relief supplies from the UK. Since then it has maintained an active role in Bosnia supporting those in need for whom there remain limited social services – in particular disabled children. The charity has extended its activities over the years to many other places of need, bringing immediate relief from specific disasters such as earthquakes, and long term support of training programs, workshops, clinics, and day centres. Most recently their focus has been on Syrian refugees in Lebanon, providing humanitarian relief of clothing, food and medicine, and supporting the setting up of schools for the children.

Edinburgh Direct Aid is an all-volunteer charity, and uses no professional fundraisers. Volunteers travel out to make direct contact with recipients, building up partnerships with local charities, developing friendships, and expanding their knowledge and understanding of the local problems. Their prime objective is that all the money they raise goes directly to those who need it most.



An EDA volunteer in Lebanon en route to Syria



Sister Margaret Duncan



Sister Margaret Duncan, who was born and brought up in Stoneyburn in West Lothian, supported the work of Edinburgh Direct Aid for many years. With her fellow nuns from the Holy Family Convent in Leith, she helped to collect and pack tons of aid for those in Bosnia afflicted not only by the immediate traumatising effects and practical difficulties of the war, but also by the more long term problems of rebuilding lives and homes.

After the war she visited psychiatric units, hospitals for the handicapped and penniless widows and children in Bosnia, bringing hope and compassion to those in continuing need long after the attention of the media had moved on. She received an Unsung Hero award at the Great Scots People of the Year Awards for her tireless devotion to the people of Bosnia in 1998. She also retained an adventurous attitude to fund raising –for example riding on a Harley Davidson motor cycle and taking a trip up a turntable ladder in her 80's – before completing her magnificent knitting marathon at the age of 92. She died in November 2013 in Birkenhead at the age of 96.

Edinburgh Direct Aid now asks that all knitters – experts or beginners (this will certainly mean they get plenty of practice) – rise to this big personal challenge in the same way, and so inspire their friends and relations to contribute

to helping those in desperate need.

NB one of the participants in the knitathon will be knitting a sweater just like those worn by Sophie Gråbøl in the famous TV series 'The Killing', which will be put up for auction. Other knitters are happy to take commissions.