

# Provost praises 97-year-old fund-raiser



Tom in Princes Street collecting for charity

Tom Gilzean, a retired bus driver and World War II veteran from Edinburgh, is a face familiar to many in Edinburgh from his days collecting for good causes outside the Marks & Spencer building on Princes Street and on the Royal Mile.

The pensioner's efforts over the last year, following almost a year in hospital after breaking his back, have resulted in £30,000 being raised for the Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity (EHC).

The money will be used to help fund a host of items and activities for new play rooms to help youngsters in the hospital enjoy being a child first and a patient second.

Tom, who also collects on behalf of other local charities including the Edinburgh Children's Taxi Outing and Prestonfield Neighbourhood Project, said: "I'm proud to be able to do my bit to help the children in the hospital and want to thank everyone who has kindly put their money into the

collection tins.

“I know that the public have had their confidence dented about charities lately following some of the recent bad headlines around certain charities.

“I have had a few negative comments said to me so I would like to show that people’s money is going to extremely worthwhile causes.

“I’ve been collecting for a long time now and love to see the generosity from locals and visitors to Edinburgh that pass by all year round.”

Tom, who holds the Legion d’Honneur and a BEM, started collecting for ECHC 17 years ago, aged 80 following the death of his wife, when he wanted to do something positive with the spare time he had..

Over the years, he’s collected over £187,000 for the charity and his efforts are held dear by both the staff and patients within the hospital.

The drawings and cards they have made him over the years are treasured possessions. His songs for donations to shoppers on Princes Street have become a familiar sound over the years and his cult status is such, that he even has his own Facebook appreciation page.

Edinburgh’s Lord Provost, Frank Ross, said: “Tom is an inspiring man who devotes his life to raising fantastic amounts of money for charity, and we are extremely fortunate in this city to have people like him who so selflessly give up their time for the good of their community.

“In 2014, the city proudly voted for him to receive the esteemed Edinburgh Award. Now, his handprints can be found set in stone outside the City Chambers where he is still regularly spotted shaking his tin in all weathers for the Edinburgh

Children's Hospital Charity.

"A war veteran at 97 years young, the delivery of a £30,000 to the charity is a remarkable achievement. He really is a local treasure."

Sue Diamond, Community Fundraising Manager at ECHC, said: "The work Tom does is truly incredible.

"To get out there in all weathers and raise the money he has done is absolutely amazing and it has, and will continue to make a massive difference to young people in hospital.

"Over the years his money has helped fund so many invaluable things that we would otherwise have not had funding for, so we really can't thank Tom enough for his efforts.

"He really is a hospital hero. This donation of £30,000 will have a huge impact as we move across to the new hospital at Little France."

ECHC support the work carried out at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children as well as other children's healthcare services across the southeast of Scotland.

To donate, visit: <https://echcharity.org/donate>