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PRESS RELEASE

Inspirational fundraiser thanked for his dedication

AN inspirational fundraiser who has dedicated his time to charity following the death of his fiancée in February has been thanked in a special presentation.

Neil Bontoft has organised numerous events and taken part in a 190 mile bike ride in aid of the Haematology Unit at Blackpool Victoria Hospital following the death of his fiancée, Siobhan (known as Shiv) Cavanagh, from leukaemia and so far raised more than £12,000 in her name.

Neil said: “The fundraising in memory of Shiv has just been phenomenal; it was even a bit of a shock when we found out how much had been raised. The support we had from family and friends was just incredible; the money they have put towards sponsorship has been great and particularly in these times.

“We have talked about doing something next year and my friends in the football team and I are considering doing a marathon. There is supposed to be a marathon for the Preston Guild so we might do that or maybe even an international cycle ride. I play football with them on a Monday night and they renamed the team ‘Team Shiv’ when we changed leagues and there are about eight lads who would do something.

“Lots of people have raised money who knew Shiv and including our fundraising, donations from the funeral and that we have raised more than £12,000 in her name; it’s amazing.”

Dr Paul Cahalin, Consultant Haematologist, said: “That sort of money makes an enormous difference and a substantial impact to the unit and I’m just overwhelmed; it’s an amazing amount. Thank you to everyone who has raised the money so much for your hard work, and in particular to Neil, Joe and Lee.

“I’m proud and honoured that you have worked so hard for us. We are going to be moving our day unit soon and it will be getting whole new facilities; when we do we will need so much and this money will be used on that.

“My sincere and heartfelt thanks go to you and everyone who raised money in Team Shiv.”

Neil continued: “I think for Shiv what made an impact in the rooms were things like TVs and creature comforts. While you are in you want it to feel as much like home as possible so I’m really pleased it will be spent on this for other

patients. Shiv was treated for about 11 months before she died. The staff at Blackpool were fantastic and are an absolute credit to the hospital.”

Fundraising Manager, Kathy Ancell said: “What the charity provides is things like the creature comforts that the NHS can’t cover because the funds are earmarked for other things. We want to thank Neil, Lee and Joseph for taking on such an immense personal and fundraising challenge, to benefit our Haematology Department. They really are inspirational and we are enormously grateful for their support. A big thank you to everyone who sponsored them.”

There were three main team members who did the bike ride, Lee Rogers, Joseph Gordon and Neil, and they went from Beverley in Yorkshire where Shiv was born on July 20th as this would have been her birthday, to Blackpool Victoria Hospital. For the last 25 miles from Ribchester to the Vic they were joined by about 15 further family and friends. Neil and Shiv were together for six years. Shiv left behind two sons, Neil’s stepsons, who also took part in the ride.



PIC: L-R Some of the Haematology staff, Dr Cahalin, Joseph, Neil and Kathy.



PIC: L-R Paul Cahalin, Joseph Gordon, Neil Bontoft and Kathy Ancell.



PICS: Joseph, Neil and Lee arrive at Blackpool Victoria Hospital.



PICS: Joseph, Kathy Ancell, Neil and Lee.

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