

The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea

25 October 2010

Youngsters challenge others to *Share Our Social* media message for RNLI SOS Day 2011

The countdown to the RNLI's biggest fundraising event, SOS Day 2011* on Friday 28 January has begun. Among hundreds planning events across the south west to raise funds for the charity's volunteer lifeboat crews and lifeguards, Fowey's under-16 gig rowers have created their own SOS rowing challenge entitled *Start On Stroke*.

Hoping to inspire other young people to take part, the youngsters launched a short film on the social media site YouTube today (Monday 25 October) and were met by the Looe under 16 gig team who accepted their SOS appeal. To view Fowey's film follow this link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KjxAtulaRU>

The team of six gig rowers from Fowey, aged between 12 and 15 will use their winter training sessions to collectively row the 24 miles or 38,624 metres along the coast from Fowey lifeboat station to Falmouth lifeboat station on indoor rowing machines.

Today the team, which includes Elen Thomas (15), Maria Norman (12), Ruby Mitchell (14), Zak Rebihi (15), Bronwen Thomas (13) and Mark Denton (15), launched a short film appealing to other gig clubs, youth groups and schools across the south west to do similar events. They will use other social networking channels to circulate the film and *Start On Stroke* mission.

Elen Thomas, a member of the Fowey under 16-gig club was motivated to do something for the RNLI's SOS Day through a connection to her local station. She says;

'RNLI SOS Day is an important date at the end of January which reminds us that the volunteer lifeboat crew are on call 365 days a year and go out in all kinds of weather. My uncle, Will Mitchell is the RNLI's Lifeboat Operations Manager for Fowey lifeboat station, and my friend Christian 'Branch' Philp is on the crew, so I know just how important the training and equipment they receive from the charity is. Both Will and Branch, and other RNLI volunteers around the south west need us to raise as much as possible on SOS Day so that they can do their job safely.

We hope other gig clubs or schools will visit the YouTube site to view our short film at www.virginmoneygiving.com/foweygigjuniors

James Chudleigh, Chairman of the Looe Rowing and Pilot Gig Club and a volunteer crewmember for Looe RNLI, accompanied the Looe under 16's team when they met with the Fowey youngsters earlier today. He says;

'Looe's under 16's gig team have accepted the challenge from Fowey and have pledged to cover the distance on their indoor rowing machines from Looe to Fowey between now and the 28 January 2011. In addition to raising vital funds for the RNLI's SOS Day, the challenge helps keep the team focussed and fit during the winter when its too cold to get out on the water and a bit of friendly rivalry between neighbouring clubs makes it even more interesting.

Its also a great opportunity to engage the gig team with their local RNLI lifeboat crew, like anyone in the south west who spends time on the water or near the coast, it could very easily be them who has to call upon the volunteers help at anytime.'

Will Mitchell, Fowey's RNLI Lifeboat Operations Manager adds;

'It's fantastic that groups of young people are so inspired to support their local RNLI volunteers, and what an impressive start to Fowey's SOS challenge! Our flank station Looe are already onboard and with their short film, they are sure to encourage other youngsters to get involved. We wish all the teams the best of luck and look forward to another successful SOS Day in the south west.'

For more information on how to get involved with the RNLI's biggest fundraising event, SOS Day 2011 on Friday 28 January log onto www.rnli.org.uk/sos

Notes to editors

1. Please find the following pictures attached credit RNLI/Phil Monckton;
 - Accepting the challenge Fred Alsop (left) of Looe and Elen Thomas of Fowey with Looe RNLI crewmember James Chudleigh
 - Accepting the challenge – Looe gig club (l-r) Fred Alsop; Bethany Hicks; Alex Hicks and Looe RNLI volunteer crewmember James Chudleigh.
 - LR-BR: James Chudleigh Looe RNLI volunteer crewmember, Mark Denton, Bronwen Mitchell, Maria Norman, Bronwen and Elen Thomas (all Fowey) and FR: Alex and Bethany Hicks and Fred Alsop (all Looe).
 - Fowey gig club from camera are... Jeremy Crapp Cox, Ruby Mitchell, Mark Denton, Elen Thomas, Bronwen Thomas, Zak Rebihi and Maria Norman.
2. *SOS Day is the RNLI's biggest fundraising event, last year, RNLI fundraisers and supporters around the south west raised nearly £66,000, by holding a variety of events across the region based on the SOS acronym. For example, *Soap Our Saloons*, *Surf Off Scotland*, *Ski Our Slope* or *Share Our Soup*. For more information log onto www.rnli.org.uk/sos

RNLI media contacts

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RNLI online

For more information on the RNLI please visit www.rnli.org.uk. News releases and other media resources, including RSS feeds, downloadable photos and video, are available at the RNLI Press Centre www.rnli.org.uk/press

Key facts about the RNLI

The RNLI charity saves lives at sea. Its volunteers provide a 24-hour search and rescue service around the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland coasts. The RNLI operates over 230 lifeboat stations in the UK and Ireland and has more than 150 lifeguard units on beaches around the UK. The RNLI is independent of Coastguard and government and depends on voluntary donations and legacies to maintain its rescue service. Since the RNLI was founded in 1824 its lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved over 139,000 lives.

Charity number CHY 2678 in the Republic of Ireland and registered in England and Wales (209603) and Scotland (SC037736)