



EVEREST RECORD BREAKER TO INSPIRE YOUTH AS GUIDE WITH THE POLAR ACADEMY

Mollie Hughes, who on 16 May 2017 became the youngest woman in the world to successfully climb Mount Everest from both its north (2017) and south (2012) sides, is to train as an Arctic polar guide with the ground-breaking Scottish youth charity, [The Polar Academy](#).

Following 18 months of specialist training, the 27 year-old Edinburgh-based and Devon-born climber aims to be part of the charity's 2019 expedition team, guiding ten teenage pupils from Bathgate Academy in West Lothian.

The Polar Academy annually supports secondary school aged pupils (aged 14-17) who on selection into the expedition team first undertake 10-months of rigorous training in their school and in the Scottish Highlands before being tasked with journeying for ten-days through Eastern Greenland.

Hughes, who also works with Tiso Group, the outdoor adventure retail specialist and her principal sponsor of the 2017 Everest expedition, will be trained as a polar guide throughout next year by Craig Mathieson, founder and expedition leader of The Polar Academy. This will include accompanying 48-year old Mathieson, Scotland's greatest living polar explorer, on special instructor training in Greenland next summer.

Under Mathieson's guidance she will learn essential skills for exploration in the Arctic and designed to ensure the guide can effectively look after her/himself and the group in all weather conditions and cope with all eventualities in a remote and unforgiving environment. Skills will include 'natural navigation' by observing the ice, wind and clouds and recognising the significance of changes in the feel and sound of the ice.

In just four years, the Bo'ness based charity has engaged over 60,000 youths across Scotland. With a vision to inspire youth through exploration, the pupils it annually selects to benefit from the training are all identified as acutely lacking in self-esteem and self-confidence and often present with a range of mental health challenges. Mathieson and his core team aim to help the youths redefine their physical and mental limits, through a process that has been described as Europe's toughest youth training programme.



Jess Ainslie, an instructor at Glenmore Lodge near Aviemore has been part of Mathieson's core team since 2015 and he has keenly observed the strong rapport and support Ainslie can establish with the expedition groups, including its young female participants. Mathieson is confident that Hughes will draw on her own experiences to make a positive impact and help nurture an awareness among the participants that they can overcome personal issues and achieve their goals.

As a teenager, Hughes was very shy and it was her positive experiences of climbing and pursuing other activities in the great outdoors that gave her the self-belief and awareness that she had the ability to achieve her aspirations in life. The mountaineer has already devoted several years to giving motivational talks in schools and youth groups about her experiences and with the aim of inspiring young people to fully realise their own potential in life.

Commenting on her forthcoming role, Mollie Hughes said: "I am absolutely thrilled to have been approached by Craig (Mathieson) to train as a polar guide with the aim of being part of his core team in 2019. While I have some of the technical skills already, the months ahead promise to be challenging and hugely rewarding.

"I have followed the work of The Polar Academy for a number of years and I'm really looking forward to being part of a dynamic charity that's working to positively impact on young lives through immersion in the great outdoors, including the wilds of Arctic Greenland. Hopefully, I can impart some of my own experiences and help the youths selected for The Polar Academy to recognise that they have the qualities within themselves to change their outlook and lives for the better."

Craig Mathieson, who in 2014 was named Scotland's first Explorer in Residence of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS) in 129 years, added: "From her feats in the mountains of Scotland and the Alps to Mount Everest, Mollie has already demonstrated that her modest, unassuming demeanour belies rock-solid determination and a cool focus allied to impressive technical abilities.

"Highly personable and with an innate ability to engage with young people, she promises to be a highly valued part of The Polar Academy team. As a mixed expedition group, it's essential we have highly competent, motivated female guides in the core team. Jess (Ainslie) has already highlighted her invaluable role as an experienced guide who in addition to strong technical skills, draws out the best in the participants and nurtures a 'can do' spirit in the female participants.

"In the months ahead, I'm really looking forward to helping Mollie develop some specific skills that are fundamental for our work in the Arctic environment. Her training will be challenging, with a focus on learning to read the ice terrain, navigate



in all weather conditions and demonstrate the capability to look after herself and the team in all circumstances. Like Jess, Mollie is a fantastic role model and I've no doubt that in the years ahead Mollie will firmly establish herself as one of very few specialist polar guides."

www.thepolaracademy.org

Issued on behalf of Tiso by Beeline PR. For further information please contact Debbie Byers on 07990 570 220 or debbie@beelinepr.com