



IT'S AN 'ICE DAY FOR THE BEACH! FINAL TYRE HAUL FOR FIFE YOUTHS AHEAD OF ARCTIC CHALLENGE

Ten youths from Lochgelly High School in Fife yesterday (10 March) and pictured, braved the chilly waters off St Andrews Beach when they dragged heavy tyres into the North Sea. It was part of their tough final training session, before leaving for Eastern Greenland on 2 April for a 10-day, 100km expedition with the Bo'ness based youth charity, The Polar Academy. In the Arctic, the pupils and head teacher Carol Ann Penrose will haul their own 45kg sled for up to ten hours a day.

Aged between 14 and 17, the teenagers (seven girls & three boys) have been relentlessly training for eight months since being selected for The Polar Academy expedition team. Nine additional pupils (see below) also benefit from the training as part of a back-up leadership team.

With a vision to inspire youth through exploration, since 2013 The Polar Academy has annually rigorously prepared a ten-strong group of shy teenagers for what proves to be a life-changing expedition. With the support of founding partners Tiso, the outdoor adventure retail specialist and Bergans of Norway, it aims to help young people rebuild lives affected by crushed self-confidence and feeling 'invisible' in school. Following the expedition, each pupil talks to school assemblies across Scotland about the impact of the charity on his or her life and with the aim of inspiring other young people to overcome their own challenges and achieve personal ambitions. In just four years, more than 50,000 school-aged children have been engaged by the charity.

The infamous two-hour beach haul is designed to replicate the resistance the team will encounter when their sleds are dragged across the snow. For Craig Mathieson, expedition leader and founder of The Polar Academy, the gruelling exercise is also a chance to check everyone is fighting fit and mentally prepared for the Arctic.

The 48-year-old, who is Scotland's greatest living polar explorer and a veteran of several expeditions to the polar regions, explained: "Supported by their school and parents, over the past eight months each member of The Polar Academy expedition team has already shown tremendous courage and determination to commit to what is Europe's toughest youth training programme.

"Through successfully overcoming tough challenges like today's beach haul, this group of remarkable youths have already grown immeasurably in mental strength and self-confidence. Greenland is no guided school-trip and it will test their resolve, fitness, focus and team working skills to the limit. But like the thirty youths who have gone before, it will be a hugely positive, rewarding and life-changing experience.

“I am sure they will return from the wilds of Greenland bursting with pride and ready to inspire thousands of other young people throughout Scotland.”

In the Arctic, each youth will haul his or her own sledge, navigate, camp on the sea-ice and undertake scientific experiments in support of the Scottish school curriculum. They may also encounter remote Inuit villages and observe the Northern Lights.

The Polar Academy is wholly self-funded and does not ask pupils to pay for their participation. With the generous support of companies and private donors, including Tiso Group, it must annually fundraise over £170,000 to operate. Carol Ann Penrose, Head Teacher of Lochgelly High School, highlighted how the pupils and parents have reacted to The Polar Academy: “The calm, understated approach of Craig (Mathieson) and his guides (Nigel Williams / George MacHardy) really gets results. Somehow they quietly instil a ‘can do’ mind-set in the participants. You come to recognise that with a little more self-belief you can accept and overcome challenges.

“The pupils are increasingly unfazed and accepting of tasks they would have recoiled from just six months ago. Previously very quiet, shy and ‘under the radar’ in school, they seem to unquestioningly accept each new challenge! I’m really looking forward to being in Greenland and watching the pupils grow further in confidence.

“The commitment of the pupils’ parents has also been outstanding. All have relentlessly fundraised and they really are getting actively involved in the whole spirit of The Polar Academy.”

Commenting on her own training ahead of the tyre haul on the beach, Carol Ann added: “I’m trying to do a little more training than the pupils so hopefully, it will not just make me fitter but ensure I can keep up in the wilds of Greenland!”

The Polar Academy Expedition Team departs on 2 April and returns to Glasgow Airport on Wednesday 18 April.

www.thepolaracademy.org

The Polar Academy 2017/2018 Expedition Team:

Morgan Adam - 14	Carol Ann Penrose - Head Teacher
Kieran Burns - 14	Daniel Pratt - 17
Daisy George - 14	Hannah Reid - 15
Megan Hargrave - 16	Lauren Scott - 14
Conner Harper - 16	Carrie Wetherspoon - 14
Carla Masterton - 14	

The Polar Academy 2017/2018 Leadership Team

Lewis Fotheringham – 14; Louise McLeary – 14; Cameron Duff – 14; Louise McArthur – 15; Isla Stewart – 16; Keigan Thomson – 16; Ryan Harley – 16; Erin Cuthbert – 14

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