



THE POLAR ACADEMY

WE'RE BACK!!!

Welcome back to our first newsletter since lockdown. With the easing of some constraints on outdoor and indoor exercise, I'm delighted that we have been able to resume our training with the Bell Baxter team. I know lockdown has been hard on many families and businesses with uncertainties regarding employment, frustrations on restrictions regarding social gatherings and significant changes to school and workplace procedures. During these uncertain times, we are reminded of what is important in life. Now more than ever, we need to reach out to those who are struggling. Check in on family, friends and colleagues and remember that at times, it's ok to not be ok and please ask for help if you need it.

Due to the pandemic, we as a charity have certainly been affected in our ability to support our kids as we would wish, and to also undertake our regular fundraising activities which ensures the smooth delivery of our programme. We have repeatedly found that charitable organisations are either pulling funding or targeting only pandemic related relief. While this is understandable, we are also hearing back from schools we are engaging with that due to lockdown, the need for programmes like the Polar Academy are even more vital. The pandemic has not reduced our workload. Instead we will be more than doubling our output next year. We are also adding in some additional support sessions for kids who need it. I would personally like to thank all of our supporters who have continued to assist us in whichever way they can. I remain grateful to our incredible Sponsors and Patrons who make all of our work possible.

Craig

THE NEW TRUCK



Our new truck has arrived courtesy of our fantastic sponsors, The Road Haulage Association. This is an incredibly welcome and much needed piece of essential equipment. Our truck will cover thousands of miles a year visiting schools and transporting our training equipment. It's also fabulous to drive!





MAKING TRACKS!



We kicked off our training again with a brilliant day of tyre-hauling on the West Sands in St Andrews. It was great to get the Bell Baxter team out and moving again. Everyone worked so hard, especially in the water section. It was a joy to see the kids and their parents again after such a long time, I've really missed everyone. Huge thanks to one of our head guides, Nigel Williams, for joining us. We would also like to send a nod of respect to Scott Graham, our expert Exercise Physiologist from Edinburgh Napier University, for donning a harness and dragging tyres along with the kids. The day was rounded off with specially made gelato cake from the fantastic Janetta's...devoured in minutes of course!

We look forward to next year when training is in full swing again and we will be inviting Patrons and Sponsors to join us on the tyre hauling days. Remember you will not have a tyre for the full duration of the walk and can share it in a small team. See if you can challenge some of your colleagues to join us!

PARENTS ROCK



An extremely important part of the Polar Academy is parental involvement and we've had some fantastic parents. Just knowing that you have a parent who can support you whenever it is possible makes a huge difference to the kids we work with. At whatever level of support, be it attending training, helping with fundraising or just there to give their kids a hug after a hard workout - the positive impact is incredible.



INTRODUCING IONA

Please allow me to introduce you to the incredible Iona Somerville. Iona is a Polar Academy Graduate who just humbles us all with her strength. Her story is below...

On May 22, 2017, Iona attended a pop concert with her friend. It should have been an incredible night for the young friends, but instead she was just 30 seconds from death when a suicide bomber detonated a shrapnel-laden device as hundreds of youngsters and their families were leaving the Ariana

Grande concert in the Manchester Arena. The atrocity left 22 dead and 600 adults and 340 children injured or maimed. Hundreds of others endured psychological trauma. The scenes Iona witnessed left her on the verge of suicide but the then 16-year-old, has clawed her way back to recovery. Now Iona is to honour the victims by becoming the youngest member of a pioneering five-strong Antarctic expedition led by UK Paralympic gold medallist Karen Darke. The intrepid team is already training for the 79-mile challenge in the most hostile environment on the planet.

It will see a new "Pole" – dubbed the Pole of Possibility – planted, with the backing of explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes. The Pole of Possibility encourages others who have suffered physical or psychological trauma to find their own inner resilience and confidence.

It's for people like Iona that I started the Polar Academy. I could see the huge potential in her – her courage, kindness and leadership. With everything that's now happened, I couldn't be any more proud of what's she's doing with Karen Darke. Everyone at the Polar Academy will support Iona as much as we can in her new challenge.



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THE EXPLORERS CLUB

I was recently asked to join the Board of the Explorers Club, Great Britain and Northern Ireland Chapter. This is an absolute honour for me and I was delighted to accept. I have been engaging regularly with club members and was involved in lectures over zoom, broadcasting throughout the world during lockdown - there's not many countries who haven't heard of the Polar Academy's work now. We hope to announce some more interesting interviews with famous explorers soon, so watch this space.

In the meantime, stay safe everyone.

