

For immediate release
March 2019

Andy's set for Lifetime Ambition by completing 10 London Marathons!

Scarborough's Andy Leak is set to complete his "lifetime ambition" by completing 10 London Marathons. The first of which was way back on Sunday 20th April 1986.

You might think that this is inspirational in itself; but for me; this is just the tip of the iceberg for quite heroic story.

Born in January 1969 in Epsom (Surrey); I lost my mother at the age of 7. From then; we moved about like a queen on a chess board. I eventually ended up in a children's home in 1977; where I remained until the summer of 1980. I then went to live back with my father who was remarried to a woman from the Seychelles. This was the start of my nightmare, when I was subjected to two years of physical abuse at the hands of my step mother; but this was only half the story.

When I was born; I inherited a genetic condition called Neuro-Fibromatosis (or NF for short). There are two versions of this: NF1 & NF2. I have NF1; this is caused by a "spelling mistake" in the gene which is found on the chromosome 17. There are around 25,000 people in the UK diagnosed with NF1. Some people with this condition then go; on to develop a further condition called "Scoliosis" (curvature of the spine). This was the situation in my case. My spine began to deform when I was around 11-12 and was detected during a routine school medical. My condition deuterated very rapidly to such an extent that I was no longer able to stand up straight. In September 1982 I was admitted into Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge. I spent the first two weeks on traction before two major operations to insert Harrington Rods to straighten my spine. I spent over two months in hospital before being discharged in Mid-November. I then spent the following nine (9) months in a plaster cast.



One week after leaving hospital, I was removed from home due to the abuse and went to live with my grandmother. In January 1983, I went to a new Boarding School (Bramfield House) in Suffolk; as I was unable to return to mainstream schooling due to the emotional / behavioral problems which I was having after my ordeal. This was the best thing that ever happened to me and was to become a significant factor in my life and this why:

The Head Master at the time was Brian Harbottle, he was into running and every Monday morning in assembly; he used to rattle on about how well he did in this race and that race. I eventually got sick of it and said to him "one day; I'm going prove that you are not the only person around here who can run a marathon", and in August 1984 did just that by finishing the St. Neots ½ marathon. That was it, I wanted to do another; and it then became my dream that one day I would go on to complete the London Marathon. This is a strange thing because when I was living at home; my step mother was watching the 1982 London Marathon on TV, and I then thought to myself; what the hell you watching this crap for! Had I never gone to this school, I would never have taken up running.

So; as you can see; running has been a significant factor in my life. When I was young, I used to go out and run nearly every day. This is how I dealt with all the pain and anger that built up over a number of years when I was a teenager. Had I not taken up running, my life may not have turned out as well as it has. Not everyone has ever backed or supported me, but I am the one who has had the last laugh.

I am sharing my story with you, because I want the message to go out to those youngsters who may feel that there's no goodies at the end of the rainbow, and that life will never get better, well yes there is, and yes it will. Have faith and believe, I've been there. Trust me, you'll thank me one day.

If that wasn't enough: Andy on the morning of January 3rd 2012; suffered from a major heart attack completely out of the blue. There is no history of heart disease in the family, so this came as a major shock. I received excellent after care service and the staff at Castle Hill Hospital near Hull, were absolutely outstanding. Not everyone who has a heart attack; lives to tell the tale. To then go on to complete yet another London Marathon is a remarkable achievement in itself.

Andy who's been working at Scarborough Sea life Centre for three years now says; this is a fantastic job; I thoroughly enjoy engaging with the guests. Part of my Degree is in Marine Biology; which makes my job even more enjoyable. Just like my previous job; no two days are ever the same. I hope that I can progress within the company (Merlin Entertainments). Previously; Andy worked at the Environment Agency in York as a Flood Resilience Officer but left last June (2015) after seven years due to the excessive commute which could sometimes take up to five (5) hours a day.

Andy would like to finish this year's in under six hours. Andy's best time was in 1987 when he finished in a time of 4hrs 45secs 02secs. Although; this is likely to have been 10-15 minutes faster than this; because back in those days there was no electronic tagging like there is today. So; your time began the moment the gun went off and not when you actually cross the start line as is the case now.



Andy has raised £1000's for various charities in his nine previous London Marathons including; Guide Dogs, Milly's Fund, British Heart Foundation, & Merlin's Magic Wand.

For his final fund-raising marathon; Andy has decided to support the charity: Nerve Tumours UK which supports people with the condition that Andy himself and several members of his family suffered / suffer from.

Neurofibromatosis (NF) is one of the world's most common neuro-genetic conditions. Every day a baby is born in the UK with Neurofibromatosis. There are over 25,000 people in the UK affected by the condition and as yet; there is no cure.

Andy has a website which is now live, just click the link to donate and show your support for this fantastic cause: www.virginmoneygiving.com/10-Today

Andy has always found in the past that not everyone likes to support a charity which is based on research or where the money raised doesn't stay within the local area where he's from. So; this year; he is also raising money for the Seal Hospital at Scarborough Sea

Life Sanctuary. Every penny raised stays in goes to this appeal. He is running a competition where people have to guess how many people will finish behind him in this year's event. The person who's the nearest will win a Breakfast with the Seals Experience for up to four people. Entry forms are available at Scarborough Sea Life until 10am Sunday 28th April or you can enter and donate online at the address shown below. The result will be confirmed by London Marathon Events as soon as the last person has crossed the line.

www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/seal-a-thon

Your Support is Appreciated.

For Press Officers / Editors:

For more information on; please contact:

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