

Peter J Isola Foundation raise £100,000 for Cancer Relief



Peter Isola.



Neil Costa.

by Priya Gulraj

The Peter J Isola Foundation has donated £100,000 to Cancer Relief Gibraltar, helping the charity reach its emergency fundraising target in one single donation.

Marisa Desoiza, Chairperson for Cancer Relief Gibraltar, expressed her worries for the future prospects of the charity after it experienced a marked decrease in donations in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis. Cancer Relief Gibraltar provides all manners of services to the Rock's cancer patients and their families and she was worried about what effect this would have on the service users. Spurred by her plea for help, local lawyers Peter Isola and Neil Costa set themselves an initial seven-day challenge to raise £25,000 for the charity. The then pair agreed to increase the challenge if they succeeded in surpassing the £50,000. The Peter J Isola Foundation raised £80,000 for Cancer Relief Gibraltar and donated a further £20,000 to bring the amount up to £100,000, quadrupling the initial fundraising target. As a keen cyclist, Mr Isola set out to cycle 40kilometres a day for seven days but upped this to 50kilometres after surpassing their initial £25,000 target on his Watt bike at home. Meanwhile fitness enthusiast, Mr Costa, challenged himself to run 10km for seven days but increased this to 14 days once the target amount doubled and he will also shave his head in the name of charity.

Now that the physical challenge is over, the total fundraising amount will be handed over to Cancer Relief this week. Mr Costa set out to take on this challenge after this newspaper reported that Cancer Relief was launching an urgent appeal to raise £100,000. With this donation, the charity has received over £120,000

of much-needed funds since launching its urgent appeal in the Chronicle during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. Mr Costa, who worked closely with the local charity during his time as Minister for Health, spoke to Mr Isola and they set out to fulfil the challenge, starting on VE Day on May 8. "I realised Cancer Relief needed

the money and I wanted to help if I could," Mr Costa explained. "I have also worked with them closely when I was Minister for Health, and even though they did very good work, I know that there are a lot of people who live with cancer who rely very much on the services they provide such as the counselling and the psychological help." "I have met many people living with cancer who really depend on their services and I thought it is going to really be quite bad if GHA patients who also rely on Cancer Relief services are not able to rely on them." And while the Government has had a "laser-beam" focus in keeping Gibraltar safe during the Covid-19 pandemic, Mr Costa thought of a different way he could help. "When you are a private citizen, the ways in which you can help the community are limited whereas when you are in Government there are many things you can do to effect change every single day," Mr Costa added. "When I read the article in the Chronicle, I thought how can I make a positive contribution at this time now that I am not in Government." Mr Costa and Mr Isola have been speaking to various business for corporate sponsors while setting up a Just Giving page to collect donations from everyone else. The Kusuma Trust donated £20,000 meanwhile other large local businesses also pledged their support. "We were hoping to raise at least £25,000 and with a higher limit of £50,000 and we crossed

that line a while back," Mr Isola said. "We could already tell we were going to cross that limit so from the beginning I started cycling 50 kilometres a day instead of 40." "I like supporting local charities where the money is spent in Gibraltar and that is very much behind the Peter J Isola Foundation," Mr Isola explained. "Therefore, Cancer Relief Gibraltar, a charity based in Gibraltar for the local community, is right up my sleeve." "The response has been tremendous from the local community and the figure just started clocking up," Mr Isola said, after he approached local businesses. "At such a difficult time in our history, to have these firms and individuals stepping up and so generously donating to this excellent cause is truly humbling." "Neil and I would like to thank each and every one of our supporters for their incredible kindness." But now that Both Mr Costa and Mr Isola spoke of the physical pain they experienced after pushing their bodies to the limits. Mr Isola is a frequent road cyclist but with the Covid-19 lockdown in place, he was left with no choice but to cycle on his Watt bike at home. He said this was much harder than he had first anticipated. "When I committed to the 50 kilometres a day, I thought it was manageable but I





“I did not realise what I had actually committed to until I was actually doing it,” he said. “There were times when I questioned if I would be able to do this.”
 “But it has been a worthwhile effort with the money we have raised and it has been a brilliant challenge.”
 Mr Isola would cycle for a duration of one hour and 45 minutes to reach his 50 kilometres target on his Watt bike.



But the 14-day running challenge for Mr Costa was so much harder than he first thought, describing the pain he felt in his right knee as he neared the end of the challenge. “When it’s the last stretch it is so much harder,” Mr Costa said. “I knew it was going to be a bit painful but what I didn’t anticipate at all was how tired I would be.”
 Mr Costa said he finds running to be the least interesting exercise and something he does for his own fitness rather than a hobby. “But when you’re doing this for fundraising, psychologically, it is not that hard,” Mr Costa said. “It’s incredible that you don’t find it so tired or challenging to run or exercise when you are doing it for charity.”
 “The mind is truly wonderful because there is no way I would have run 10kms a day for 14 days straight under any other circumstances.”
 The money donated will go towards providing support for people living with cancer for over three months, Mrs Desoiza said. “This is an amazing unprecedented donation raised from a single event,” Mrs Desoiza added. “Cancer Relief is so grateful to Neil and Peter for taking on their challenge and raising so much money for the charity and thank you so much to all who contributed.”
 “I don’t know how they kept going every day, and I did express my concerns, but now I just have to thank them for all their efforts.”



A huge thank you to all who made this happen



Pic: Francis Silva

VIEW FROM YOUR WINDOW: With the coronavirus outbreak those over 70 years old have been told to remain home. The vulnerable with underlying health conditions have also been advised to limit contact and stay indoors. In today’s edition we bring all those without a view from their windows a photo submitted by Francis Silva. The Chronicle encourages people to send a photo from their windows with a view so we share it with those keeping safe at home. Photos can be emailed to: features@chronicle.gi