

Cardiac nurse tackles Inca Trail for heart charity



A cardiac nurse specialist at Abergavenny's Nevill Hall Hospital is planning the challenge of a lifetime to raise funds for a local charity close to her heart.

In June, Sarah Howard, 49, from Pontypool, will swap the peaks of Bannau Brycheiniog for the gruelling Inca Trail in Peru, in aid of the North Gwent Cardiac Rehabilitation and Aftercare Charity.

"Walking the Inca Trail is something I've wanted to do since I was in my early 20s," says Sarah, who works with heart patients at Abergavenny's Nevill Hall and Ebbw Vale's Aneurin Bevan Hospitals, as well as running the heart failure service in Blaenau Gwent.

"Given my day job is Cardiac Rehab, I know how important it is for heart patients to carry on exercising safely after they leave our hospital-based programme. It's vital for their health and well-being. So it makes sense to use this trip to raise funds for a local charity that provides ongoing community-based cardiac rehab exercise classes, led by properly qualified instructors.

"The North Gwent Cardiac Rehabilitation and Aftercare Charity provides an amazing service and subsidises the cost of classes, to help make them more affordable for people who really need them.

And the team does it without any NHS money, relying wholly on fundraising, donations and grants."

Sarah, who'll be accompanied by her older sister Melanie, 52, sets off on the two-week trip on 12 June. They'll spend the first few days acclimatising to the high altitude at the starting point

where the sisters will trek some 28 miles over four days, climbing through high cloud forests, past thundering waterfalls and ancient Inca ruins. They'll eventually reach a height of 4,200m at the ominously named Dead Woman's Pass, before descending into the famed lost city of Machu Picchu.

"The altitude is the big unknown," says Sarah, who's been training for the past 18 months. "I've done a lot of resistance and strength work to build my stamina, and in the mountains here I

love going uphill and know I can walk all day. But you never know how you'll react to the reduced oxygen at that kind of altitude. I still hope we adapt quickly!"

To sponsor Sarah and help her reach her £1,000 target for the North Gwent Cardiac Rehabilitation and Aftercare Charity, please visit her Just Giving page:

<https://tinyurl.com/mr2778y4>. Or head to JustGiving.com and search for "Sarah's fundraiser for North Gwent Cardiac Rehabilitation and Aftercare Charity".

- For more info on the charity, and how to join their cardiac rehab exercise classes, please visit cardiac-rehab.org.uk



Sarah and Melanie

