

Friday, November 27, 2015 at 2:05PM

North Cumbrian vets go that extra mile for air ambulance appeal

By Freya Findlay

SOCIAL BOOKMARKS

A group of vets has cycled, sailed, swum, walked, run and baked their way to raising hundreds of pounds for the SkyCall Appeal.



Front, from left, Ayesha Watson, Dawn Allonby, Diane Armstrong with Dodger and Fizz. Back, Marcea Kendall, Andrea Longcake, Rosa Dunbar, Sam Holliday, Joanne Laidlow

Vets at Paragon Veterinary Group in Dalston completed a series of challenges over the summer to raise money for the Great North Air Ambulance Service (GNAAS).

Their efforts raised a fantastic £402.53, which they have donated to the GNAAS through The Cumberland News' SkyCall Appeal.

This means their money will go towards buying lifesaving equipment.

The appeal is just a few thousand pounds away from our £60,000 target, and will soon be able to buy two new state-of-the-art defibrillators thanks to readers' generosity. The first £20,000 raised has

already bought two hi-tech portable ultrasound machines for the dedicated Pride of Cumbria helicopter and doctors' car.

Diane Armstrong, centre manager of Paragon Vets, said: "Because of where we are and where we're located, we thought [the GNAAS] would be a good charity to be involved with."

The Paragon practice took on the fundraising as part of the XLVets charity challenge. XLVets is a group of independently owned veterinary practices in UK, Ireland and New Zealand.

To celebrate its 10th anniversary, XLVets organised a 'round the world challenge'. The aim was to cover a distance of 23,605.63 miles, meaning each practice had to cover just over 450 miles without a motor.

Practices could give the majority of the money they raised to a local charity of their choice, with the remainder of the cash from all the practices in the UK, Ireland and New Zealand pooled and given to Send a Cow. The charity helps give farmers in Africa the skills and training needed to provide for their families, as well as giving them resources to build a sustainable future.

All the vets and staff at Paragon got involved in the charity challenge in one way or another and together they covered 767 miles.

Cake sales were also held at the practice and a large group went with their children and dogs on a walk up Aira Force waterfall and beyond at Ullswater.

Many of the vets decided to take on cycling challenges. These included: managing director David Black and his wife, Sue, who cycled from Dalston to the XLVets AGM in Liverpool; farm vet Miriam Hedley, and trainee nurse, Rachael Evans, who went biking at Thirlmere; equine vet Paul May, who went on an epic bike ride covering a large chunk of the Lake District; and small animal vet and partner in the practice Graham Lewis, who cycled up Hardknott and Wrynose Pass, completed a duathlon in the Scottish hills, and cycled for an hour in reception at Dalston.

Mr Lewis also ran and walked up Scafell Pike and across to Coniston with farm vet Barry Cooper. Others decided to take to the water – Sam Harding and Miriam Hedley went sailing on Ullswater and Anne Abbs went swimming in Coniston Water, while colleague Ruth Simmons gave her support from a boat.

Finally Ann Noble and Rachael Evans started running after work with other colleagues, covering many miles around Dalston.

If you are interested in taking on a challenge for the SkyCall Appeal, let us know. Contact reporter Freya Findlay on 01228 612695 or email freya.findlay@cnmedia.co.uk