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Notts County FC's Mike Edwards Supports Cancer Project



Notts County footballer Mike Edwards will train alongside a group of Nottingham men diagnosed with prostate cancer next week to help raise awareness for a new exercise scheme.

The project, which is a collaboration between Notts County FC Football in the Community and Macmillan Cancer Support, helps people who have finished cancer treatment to stay active and healthy. It also helps patients cope with

the side effects of treatment and reduce the chances of the cancer returning.

Known as the Macmillan CARE Programme (Cancer and Rehabilitation Exercise), the project has already received over 100 referrals, is currently working with over 50 people living in Nottinghamshire and is about to celebrate its first birthday.

Next Tuesday (8th March) Mike, who lost his gran and half cousin to cancer, will join the men's exercise session to provide a bit of added motivation and help raise awareness for the project and prostate cancer awareness month.

Mike said: "I'm pleased to be supporting FITC's CARE programme. Cancer is something that affects everyone at some point, whether they have experienced cancer themselves, or have a friend or family member who has been affected.

"At the age of 16, I'll never forget, as my mum nursed my Nan through the final weeks of her life. After having a mastectomy almost a year previous, it proved in vain as the years of endless smoking took its toll on my loving Nan who I'll always remember for making the best home-made chips topped with fried eggs (my usual post-match Sunday league feed).

"On top of that my half-cousin lost her life in her mid 30's, leaving her husband and two young children behind just over a few years ago now. I'm a dad of two young boys so I

often consider the feelings my immediate family would go through if they were in the same situation, a terrifying thought. But that's why projects like this are so important.

“As a footballer your life is about fitness and health. The men and women on this project represent how important and beneficial exercise can be on the mind and body, helping them to overcome a physical and emotional battle away from sport. It's great that Notts County FC Football in the Community and Macmillan are working together to deliver this brilliant project.”

Frank Wilson, 60, from West Bridgford, was diagnosed with prostate cancer eight months ago and is one of the men involved in the project. Fortunately the treatment was successful however he is still dealing with the after effects of cancer and has struggled to regain his fitness and strength after a long period of inactivity.

He said: “The diagnosis was quite a shock. I thought I was wasting everyone's time. Nevertheless I agreed to a biopsy but was very unprepared for the cancer diagnosis.

“After the diagnosis you don't really think beyond the cancer. You just focus on getting rid of it, then you realise there are still considerable after effects to deal with.”

Being inactive was not something which came naturally to Frank, having spent the previous years travelling the world supporting his children as they competed both in the UK and internationally at white water canoe slalom paddlers. Both Mikey and Natalie were part of the Team GB Junior and U23 Canoe Slalom squad.

Frank said: “I wanted to try and rehabilitate myself and get back into activity as I'd had weeks of just sitting on the sofa. I'd previously done a lot of walking and a little bit of cycling - I'd been healthy and moderately fit. My nurse said the CARE project could help me to get my fitness and energy levels up.”

Frank started going to the CARE sessions in November and the project has already had a positive impact on him as he tries to get back to normal life after treatment.

“I think exercise is good for your state of mind. It makes you feel like you're taking control of your situation. When I was given the diagnosis, it was a real shock. By doing something physical it makes you feel a bit more in control and you feel like you're helping with your own treatment. All the medical care is fantastic but you've got to help yourself too.

“When I go to the CARE sessions we do circuit training and fitness classes in an environment with other people affected by cancer. The sessions are run by Notts County Football in the Community coaches who are excellent at motivating us. Claire and Josh are always encouraging and supportive. We warm up, do stretches, then we do circuit training focussing on aerobic fitness then strength and conditioning. The sessions end with some sort of game, like badminton, soft-ball tennis or cricket. It's designed so you can exercise at your own level and there are options so you can push yourself a little bit more if you feel up to it. It's a great environment and something I look forward to every week.”

The Notts County FC Football in the Community and Macmillan CARE Programme also supports women with cancer, including Sue Wilby, 59, from Bingham.

“Fatigued, no self-worth, I was asleep a lot of the time, struggling at work,” is how Sue Wilby describes her life before joining the project last September.

Sue had been through a battle with breast cancer and had been back to work since September 2014 before she decided something needed to be done about her quality of life. Struggling with chronic fatigue on a daily basis had left Sue working hard to get through day to day life as a teaching assistant and home life.

“I would get very, very tired. I would cope with work because you have to push yourself, then I would go home and have my tea and that would be it. I would be asleep. No matter how much sleep I got I would always, always be tired,” she said.

Sue had no social life and little energy to spend time with her family. Then her breast care nurse spoke to her about an exercise programme centred on supporting people like her.

Sue said: “Nobody is judging you when you’re in there, you just do your own thing, at your own pace and you improve yourself whereas if you do it as an individual the motivations not there, so it’s lovely. And all the staff are so good at motivating you. Who would have thought a professional football club would deliver this kind of work in the community?”

The programme has revitalised Sue’s life. She said: “You’re more enthusiastic with everything and that reflects with the children as well because I’m a teaching assistant so you need to be on the ball all the time. You need to be upfront and fun”.

As well as the impact the project has had on Sue’s physical wellbeing it’s also helped with her mental and social wellbeing.

“You start talking with people, you want to go out and socialise. You feel better and because you feel better it reflects inwardly and outwardly,” she said.

The project has grown significantly since it launched a year ago. It is part of the Macmillan Cancer Partnership in Nottinghamshire which brings together the county’s health and social care organisations to improve local cancer services and address the growing number of people surviving and living longer with cancer.

The Macmillan CARE programme is one of 18 projects and pilots to benefit from more than £3million investment from Macmillan.

Emma Trent manages the Macmillan CARE project at Notts County FC Football in the Community.

She said: “This project has been absolutely amazing. It truly is incredible to pop into a session to see the transformation in our participants’ fitness, strength and self-esteem. It has been great to see friendships forming on the project and because of this people are now exercising together in addition to what our coaches do with them each week.

“Working with Macmillan has been a wonderful experience. The support and guidance we have had from them is what has got us to this point, and what makes the partnership and the programme so strong.”

Elaine Wilson, Senior Macmillan Development Manager and lead for the Macmillan Cancer Partnership in Nottinghamshire said: “The Macmillan CARE programme has already made a huge difference to so many people affected by cancer and we want to make sure the fantastic work continues. With more people surviving and living longer with cancer it’s even more important that they can enjoy a good quality of life after treatment. The work being delivered by Notts County FC Football in the Community does exactly that and really embodies the aims and objectives of the Macmillan Cancer Partnership in Nottinghamshire.”

For more information about the project contact, Health Manager, Emma Trent by phoning 0115 9055 896 or by emailing et@nottscountyfitc.org.uk.

Alternatively there is a self-referral form on the FITC website at www.nottscountyfitc.org.yk/care where people can also read, see and watch videos about the project.

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Photocall

Media are invited to a photocall with Mike Edwards and participants of the men’s Macmillan CARE programme exercise session at The Portland Leisure Centre, Muskham Street, Nottingham, NG2 2HB on Tuesday March 8th at 5:30pm.

For further information, please contact:

Chloe Ingham, Regional Communications Officer, Macmillan Cancer Support, on 01904 756444 or 07720593471

cingham@macmillan.org.uk or Gemma Burman, Media Officer at Notts County FC Football in the Community, on 0115 955 7215 or mgb@nottscountyfitc.org.uk

Notes to Editors:

About Macmillan Cancer Support

When you have cancer, you don't just worry about what will happen to your body, you worry about what will happen to your life. At Macmillan, we know how a cancer diagnosis can affect everything and we're here to support you through.

From help with money worries and advice about work, to someone who'll listen if you just want to talk, we'll be there. We are millions of supporters, professionals, volunteers, campaigners and people affected by cancer. Together we make sure there's always someone here for you, to give you the support, energy and inspiration you need to help you feel like yourself again. We are all Macmillan.

No one should face cancer alone. Call us free on 0808 808 00 00 (Monday to Friday, 9am–8pm) or visit macmillan.org.uk