

On yer bike! soldiers pedal for sick ex-combat medic

Thursday 6th February 2014



Katie Boase, Katrina Brown and Hayley Shirley

SOLDIERS were peddling their way to a life-saving treatment for former army combat medic Katrina Brown at the Asda Orbital yesterday.

Friends and former colleagues of the 31-year-old from 29 Regt at South Cerney stepped up the fundraising efforts in a 15-hour cycling marathon to pay for treatment only available in America which costs more than £100,000.

Meanwhile 20-year-old Jade Gaches had her head shaved at the last minute to raise further funds for the cause.

In 2003 Katrina was exposed to depleted uranium while serving in Iraq. The radioactive material caused her to develop systemic sclerosis, causing her immune system to shut down, and froze parts of her heart and lungs, as well as other vital organs.

She was facing the fact that the condition would kill her since no treatment is available in the UK.

Then she found a hospital in Chicago which could perform a stem-cell transplant if she could raise the cash.

Katrina said: "I wasn't that bothered to be honest. In the Army you're trained to face the fact you might die, so when I went to Iraq I was aware that I might not come back.

"I never thought we would raise so much money so quickly. We only found out last October that this treatment was available, and we only have £5,000 left to raise."

Now, Katrina has started raising money to help other people with her condition. She said: "The best thing about this is being able to help other people.

"I know exactly what these people are going through, thinking that there is nothing that they can do, so I have started fundraising to help them as well. This isn't about me, it's about all the other people out there who need help."

The event was organised by Cpl Katie Boase, who wanted to do something a bit different to raise the money.

The 25-year-old said: "I was shocked when I found out about what happened, shocked there isn't much help available and wanted to do something for her."

Last October Katrina went to Chicago for a series of tests to find out if she could have the procedure, which involves stripping out her immune system using chemotherapy and rebooting it with her own stem cells.

She will fly out to Chicago again on April 7, where she will stay for a couple of months for the treatment to be carried out.

To find out about the condition or to help Katrina in her fundraising visit www.katrinastfuture.org.