

# DUBLIN FIREFIGHTER TAKES ON COSTA RICA CHALLENGE FOR SICK CHILDREN

Dublin firefighter Padraig Thompson, who has been involved in a number of fundraising challenges for the Children's Medical and Research Foundation (CMRF) Crumlin over the last two years, is now training to run over 100 miles in six days through the jungle of Costa Rica in January 2019 to raise funds for some of Ireland's sick children.

**P**adraig Thompson from Clondalkin will leave for San José on 12 January 2019 and run a marathon a day for six days. He is keen to raise funds through physical challenges to support families going through their toughest emotional challenge in the hospital.

According to Padraig, he's done a "few crazy things over the years" to help raise awareness of CMRF Crumlin, which has included running a marathon blind-folded! "Last year I ran about three marathons in one go – so that's 116 kilometres in total! I started the Saturday night before the actual race and ran straight into the Dublin Marathon.

"I raised money for CMRF and also did it as a mark of respect and to raise awareness of the Rescue 116 helicopter that went down last year. I ran the 116 kilometres in memory of the team on the helicopter."

## MARATHON PROPOSAL

He said that a couple of years ago he gave himself a really good challenge. "I'm a firefighter and we use mannequins during training, so it gave me an idea. I ran the Dublin Marathon with one of the mannequins on my shoulders for the entire race. They weigh about 40-50 kilos! This represents the weight on your shoulders when you've a sick child in hospital.

"I actually stopped during the race when I was passing my girlfriend, who was cheering me on, and I proposed to her there and then. It was a really special fundraising experience because thankfully



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she said yes!

"She thought it might happen when we were in New York, where I ran the marathon a few times for CMRF, but it was a surprise for her in Dublin. We didn't realise until that evening that my proposal had gone viral and was online and on TV too."

#### #RUN100MILES CHALLENGE

In August, Padraig took part in the #Run100Miles Challenge in memory of his mother who had lost her battle against cancer at the end of July. During the 31 days of August 100 people ran a mile and it was added to the total, with the funds going to CMRF Crumlin and cancer awareness.

In January 2019 Padraig will fly to San José with 15 other runners to take on the Costa Rica Challenge. He'll

**ABOUT CMRF Crumlin:** Established in 1965, the Children's Medical Research Foundation (CMRF) is the principal fundraising body for Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin and The National Children's Research Centre.

CMRF organises fundraising drives to allow for research into the cause, treatment, care and prevention of children's illness and disease and to actively support excellence in the care and treatment of sick children by providing additional equipment, facilities and assistance to patients and their families within Children's Hospital at Crumlin.

For further information about the Foundation visit [www.cmrp.org](http://www.cmrp.org).



Padraig, who ran the Dublin Marathon with a mannequin on his shoulders, stopped during the race to propose to his girlfriend, who said Yes!

## CHARITY FUNDRAISER



Last year Padraig Thompson ran 116km to raise money for CMRF and also in memory of the crew of 'Rescue 116' who lost their lives in March 2017 (clockwise): The bodies of Captain Dara Fitzpatrick and Captain Mark Duffy were recovered but winch operators Ciarán Smith and Paul Ormsby are still missing.

stay in local houses with a guide to bring him through the jungle. Padraig has taken part in the Dublin Marathon and he's also run the New York Marathon to raise funds for CMRF.

"The reason I keep going back to CMRF is because of the incredible relationships I have with the staff there. Antoinette, Gerry and any of the team I work with have always been incredible. There's a sort of family feel to it. I mightn't see anyone for a year until we get to New York for the marathon, but suddenly it's like being reunited with family.

"This feeling makes it so easy to fundraise with CMRF Crumlin. In 2010 some American firefighters visited us at work and we brought them to see Our Lady's Children's Hospital in Crumlin. My son was born that same year and it hit me that I could help the families in the hospital.

### EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

Padraig said that as firefighters, he and his colleagues expect to be able to handle tough situations during the course of their job, but claimed that it becomes a very emotional experience when they have to help children. "So, I was inspired to fundraise and do my bit to help the children and families who are going through difficult times."

Padraig's father passed away before the New York Marathon in 2017, but with the support and encouragement of his family and friends he still ran the marathon for Our Lady's Children's Hospital in Crumlin.

"The training for the Costa Rica Challenge now is also difficult, having only lost mam in July." Padraig said. "But when I put my runners on and get out the door I convince myself to do a little. Then I get into it and I keep going. I find the dark evenings easier to run it so it'll be better as the nights start drawing in."

He said he'll be ready for Costa Rica on 12 January next to help the families in the hospital. "When I'm training and it gets tough, I just try to think of how vital the fundraising is to the organisation and to some of Ireland's sickest children."

This always motivates Dublin firefighter Padraig Thompson to keep going. "If I can help even one child or one family through their toughest emotional challenge, I'm happy to do any physical challenge I can. CMRF has been there for so many people. It feels good to be there for them too and to give something back."

## GREATER FOCUS NEEDED ON CHILDHOOD ILLNESS RESEARCH

*Fifty eight per cent of the Irish population has been affected by childhood illness, according to new research released by CMRF Crumlin.*

*CMRF Crumlin is funding 43 active research grants into cardiology, infection, cancer, immunology, and neonatology. Over the past year, it has committed €8.4 million to Our Lady's Children's Hospital and the National Children's Research Centre. With over 150,000 children on average walking through the doors of Our Lady's every year, vital funding is needed to help children and their families through their most vulnerable moments, noted Lisa-Nicole Dunne, CEO of CMRF Crumlin.*

*"Less than three per cent of all medical research funding in Ireland goes into paediatric research, so it's grossly underfunded. The fact that childhood illness touches over half the population really drills homes the importance of this as an issue," she added.*

*"More focus needs to be given to childhood illness research so that children, their parents and communities can find answers, and get to survive, thrive and have a good quality of life. Whilst significant progress has been made, this is not always the case.*

*"Working with our partners at the National Children's Research Centre and at Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin, we have a strong plan to radically improve the focus on paediatric research to do whatever it takes to change the record on childhood illness and we need public support to achieve this."*

