



Meet John, our 2023 Junior Duke Charity Appeal Ambassador

My name is John Prendergast. I have just turned 19 and am one of seven children. On 14th of January 2023, I will be heading out to Africa to take part in the Tour d'Afrique. This adventure will see me cycle the length of Africa, from Cairo to Cape Town; this is a distance of 5,400 miles (8,660 km). The route will go through Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa. I plan to arrive in Cape Town on the 22nd of April 2023. We are unable to cycle through Ethiopia due to current political instability.

I will be taking part in the Tour d'Afrique to raise vital funds for the Elsie Normington Foundation, which is a charity currently constructing a respite and play centre in Inverness for children and young adults up to the age of 30 with learning difficulties and complex special needs. This will be known as the Haven Centre and, when completed, will be Scotland's first multi-purpose centre, providing respite and social care for these young people, as well as crucial support for their families. The centre will offer safe, happy, and appropriate activities for its service users, while their families have a short break from the unrelenting commitment of the round the clock complete-and-loving care that they offer.

More information about the Haven Centre can be found here: <https://www.havencentre.org>

My older brother, Andrew, is 21 years old, and has Autism and Down's Syndrome. Andrew left school during the lockdown in 2020, and he is yet to fully understand why he no longer has that constant place of support and activity in his routine. Growing up around the daily hardships faced by Andrew and my family, I fully understand the importance of the work being completed by the Elsie Normington Foundation and recognise the far-reaching impact that The Haven Centre will have across the

Highlands. I endeavour to help Andrew, along with many other young people and their families with similar difficulties, and aid the Elsie Normington Foundation in providing a full and complete service to such an important contingent of our community.

A small proportion of the money raised will go towards the many costs associated with this expedition. All remaining funds will be given to the Elsie Normington Foundation. I will be setting off just over 70 years since my grandfather, David Lessels, left his home in Dunfermline, Scotland, to complete a similar expedition. Over the course of 5 years, he walked the length and breadth of Africa, finally returning home in 1955. I am sure that he will be watching over me with a wink and a smile as I follow in his footsteps and do my best to help this wonderful charity.

I hope you, your staff and your pupils will enjoy seeing the updates I send so that you can all understand the importance and relevance of the life skills being learned through working on their Junior Duke Award. I will certainly have to use plenty of those skills on my journey!

Thank you for taking the time to read my page. I am extremely grateful for any donations that you might be able to make.

This QR code links directly to my GoFundMe page:

