

Press Release

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CHARITY FOUNDATION CELEBRATES MULTI-MILLION POUND LANDMARK

Local County Durham based charity County Durham Foundation is celebrating ten years of handing out ten million pounds in cash lifelines to good causes.

To mark the occasion the foundation is inviting the public to a huge two-day celebration event to be held at Durham County Hall, sponsored by developer H.J. Banks and Co Ltd on 24th and 25th September (10am to 4pm).

The event will bring together people from all parts of the community that have helped the foundation make an impact across County Durham and Darlington.

The foundation, whose vice presidents include the Rt. Hon Tony Blair, Prime Minister and environmentalist Dr David Bellamy, was launched in 1995 to distribute grants and build an invested endowment fund, which now has 60 donors including companies, individuals, families, trusts and organisations. It is now one of the most successful community foundations in the country and has managed to raise over £13million, beating London, Birmingham, Sheffield and Manchester in its endowment fundraising in one of the most deprived counties in the country.

Funds generated from the ever-increasing endowment fund are distributed to good causes each year. Representatives from various organisations will be at the event to demonstrate how the grants have helped them.

North West Durham MP Hilary Armstrong was at Durham County Hall today (Wednesday, September 14th) with other foundation supporters and partners to issue an open invitation to the public to come and join in the fun at this weekend's event and to congratulate the foundation on its work.

Hilary Armstrong said: "I'm pleased to join in the celebration of a big milestone for County Durham Foundation. £10 million in ten years is a fantastic achievement.

"Over the past decade the Foundation has set out to make a real difference to people and communities across County Durham and Darlington. With the backing of generous supporters, they have been able to help local people tackle local priorities. I hope the next ten years brings even more success."

The foundation is gaining momentum with 60 per cent of the £10 million grants given having been distributed over the last three years and its endowment fund now stands at £5 million – up £2million in the last 2 years. The aim is to grow that investment fund to £10 million by 2008 with the help of local and national donors.

Over the last ten years County Durham Foundation and its fund holders have helped 3,400 groups and 1,450 people in County Durham and Darlington to achieve their goals through receiving a grant.

Grants have ranged from the largest of £250,000 to the smallest, which was just £10. The average size grant is £1,700 with an application success rate of 68% - or more than one in two applicants getting a grant. This rate is boosted by the foundation encouraging people and groups to talk to staff for advice before submitting an application.

A selection of successful applicants will be at the weekend event as well as donor organisations and groups. As well as displays there will be performances by ten marching bands and 20 music, dance and theatre groups. There will also be a charity balloon race to mark the occasion.

A number of speeches will be made by high profile guests including the Rt Revd Dr Tom Wright Bishop of Durham, environmentalist Dr David Bellamy, foundation President and Lord Lieutenant of County Durham Sir Paul Nicholson and foundation Chairman Bernard Robinson OBE DL, a former North East Business Man of the Year.

County Durham Foundation Chief Executive Gillian Stacey said: "It's incredible to think we have arrived at this wonderful landmark and it's great to look back at the superb work that has been done in the community.

"Our funds are distributed solely in County Durham and Darlington with the aim of helping grassroots organisations and positively affecting people's lives. We urge people to come along to County Hall to see what fantastic work has been done and to have a fun time too!"

County Durham Foundation is supported by a number of high profile businesses and organisations including Northumbrian Water, property developers HJ Banks & Co Ltd, Northern Rock, Northern Electric and Arriva. Local families have also been as supportive with Peter and Jayne Cook, Sir Paul and Lady Nicholson plus Mark l'Anson all holding endowment funds.

The foundation works through a network of hundreds of voluntary organisations, community groups and local authority organisations to help distribute funds across County Durham and Darlington.

As well as managing the endowment fund on behalf of its donors the foundation also distributes Government awards through Sports Relief, Neighbourhood Renewal, Community Chest, European Social Fund Global Grants, Landfill Tax and Government Office North East.

Through its 60 fund holders (individuals, families, companies, trusts, the Big Lottery and national and local government) County Durham Foundation has helped to pay for an estimated:

- 600 after school club and childcare places
- 1950 training courses for the unemployed
- 220 environmental improvements to local community gardens/parks
- 120 self-help groups
- 500 activities for groups of children and young people

- 240 people to gain a qualification (many of whom had not previously gained any)
- 240 musical instruments for brass bands
- 230 refurbishments to community buildings and halls
- 76 team football strips for youth teams (boys and girls)
- 13 talented young people to participate at a senior level in their chosen field of music or sport
- 60 luncheon clubs for elderly people
- 1200 day trips and visits for the isolated or vulnerable
- plus many items of equipment and thousands of groups to increase the range of activities, services and support they give to their local communities.

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For further press information contact Andy Barker at Results Network PR on 07855 352 303 or Mel Caldwell at County Durham Foundation on 0191 383 0055.