

# Firewalk event: An introductory guide for Fundraising Groups

Organising a firewalk event for Marie Curie has the potential to raise a good amount of income as well as introducing new people to your fundraising group and to the charity.

If this is something you are considering, please read on to find out more. If you decide to go ahead, your Community Fundraising can send you a more detailed guide, including a list of firewalk companies, press release templates and participant welcome packs.

## 1. What is a Firewalk event?

Put simply...sponsored individuals (after a motivational training session) walk across burning wood embers without experiencing any pain or injury.



*Marie Curie Camberley Fundraising Group September 2015*

Between 30 and 100 participants will take part in the practice of walking barefoot over hot embers and gain sponsorship to do so.

After securing a venue, date and recommended firewalk company, the Fundraising Group can begin to recruit participants to take part.

Participants register with a fee and in doing so sign up to raise a minimum amount of sponsorship. Upon registration they receive a participant pack with further information about the activity and raising sponsorship.

On the day of the event, the booked firewalk company provide everything needed to set up and run the firewalk. Participants are given a closed briefing by firewalk trainers on how to walk over hot embers before they take part. After the briefing, participants walk over the fire one by one, some

companies allow people to walk over it more than once. The company are responsible for assessing suitability of people to walk before they step onto the fire.

Spectators are welcome to come and watch and add to the atmosphere by cheering on their friends and family. Whilst spectators are waiting for participants to complete the briefing, it is a good opportunity to offer food and drink that keeps them warm and to have fundraising activities such as tombola/raffle. It is likely 2-3 times the number of participants will come along to watch.

It is also worthwhile having a photographer to take some great pictures.

### **How much can be raised?**

Typically, a successful firewalk event raises around £10,000.

- Camberley Fundraising Group held a successful firewalk which raised approximately £10,000 net.
- Renfrewshire Fundraising Group has had two excellent, highly profitable events raising approximately £11,000 net in 2014 and raising approximately £12,000 net in 2015.

### **What type of group can organise a successful firewalk?**

Feedback from fundraising groups that have organised a firewalk, and the companies themselves, strongly suggest a successful fundraising event is due to a group having:

- A good network of support
- Prominence in local communities
- Prominence on social media

## **2. How does the fundraising work?**

Participants cover event costs by paying a registration fee on booking and income is generated by raising sponsorship. We recommend setting a minimum sponsorship level.

Registration fees and minimum sponsorship levels vary. Parameters to ensure a successful fundraising event are laid out below. However, within these parameters a decision should be made based on local knowledge of the community.

- We recommend aiming for a minimum of 30 participants and no more than 100
- Registration fees should be set between £25 -£35
- Minimum sponsorship should be set between £75-125

Cost of companies can vary slightly around £1,500, and we would recommend setting a registration fee that ensures the cost of booking a firewalk company is covered by the expected number of participants, for example 50 participants x £30 registration fee = £1,500.

## **3. Organising the event**

1. Book a venue and choose a date
2. Book a company
3. Fill the event

## How much time is required to organise this event?

The event requires a three month lead time once the date and venue have been confirmed, in order to allow time for recruiting participants and raising sponsorship.

## Choosing a venue

The best venues are places that are used to welcoming the local community and people will feel comfortable in – such as sports clubs (golf, rugby football) health clubs, hotels etc. Their car parks or grounds make ideal venues. Venues will need:

- To be enclosed
- A flat outside space
- A briefing room, separate to registration and spectator access
- A waiting room for spectators (also used for registration)
- Plenty of parking
- A bar and food facilities
- The surface must be safe and comfortable to walk on with bare feet

## Selecting a date and time

An autumn or winter evening: September, October and November are the most popular times of year. Otherwise February, March and April are also suitable.

After dark: a firewalk needs to take place after dark so those tending the fire and participants can see the hot embers and visually recognise hot areas.

Typically, registration would open at 6pm or 6.30pm, with the walk taking place at 8.30pm or 9pm (after an hour and a half briefing)

If the event is to be held on a week night spectators may be conscious of the time a walk starts, particularly if young children want to watch.

- Firewalk company arrive to set up (60mins)
- Registration opens (30mins)
- Briefing begins (60-90mins)
- Participants walk (20mins)
- Firewalk ends and is extinguished (30mins)
- Clean up is complete (30mins)

The whole event including set up and take down should take approximately 4 hours.

## Booking a company

We have spoken to a number of companies and completed relevant checks on items such as insurance, so you don't have to. Your Community Fundraiser will have further information about the companies we have spoken to and recommend

## Filling the event

The event attracts a wide variety of people – younger and older, male and female, individuals and groups. You can work with your Community Fundraising Team to engage local corporate and

community partners.

We recommend firewalkers are aged 16 and over and that parental consent is obtained for anyone aged between 16 and 18.

Community Fundraisers will have all the materials you need such as press releases to help you recruit participants

### **What happens next?**

If you are interested in going ahead with organising a Firewalk, your Community Fundraiser can send you a more detailed document about how to go about it. This will help the group determine the amount of input required to host an event, and the amount they can raise.

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