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Rosanna Rafel (inset) in the snowy wastes of Sweden and the view from Rosanna's sled.

Arduous and inspiring: my Arctic adventure

By Rosanna Rafel

I have just returned from a 5-day epic adventure in the Swedish Arctic, sledding with a pack of four dogs and surviving in a wilderness lodge. It was for Spinal Research UK, a charity which resonates with me because my mother has undergone her third bout of surgery in the space of three years to correct her spine.

Excited huskies

I set off to Kiruna, Northern Sweden, anticipating the possible minus 20 degrees weather, fully equipped with my base layers and a warm sleeping bag. One thing I realised: wearing four layers including an Arctic suit still doesn't keep you warm if you're standing still for a long period of time in weather that is colder than most freezers!

From the get-go we were challenged; whether it was chopping wood for the fire, feeding and looking after the dogs, or bringing water to the wilderness cabin. Every morning the team were greeted by the howling and barking of the dogs when they knew they were about to go sledding: the cross-bred huskies loved to run.

The worst day

During lunch stops, we often ate in tepees which we could warm up with a fire but no such luck on day two. After a tough day of hills, including falling off the sled on the way down them, we were exposed to the elements, covered in snow and ice with no way of heating up.

I was shivering, questioning why I was there, and moving around to get warm but failing. What got me through was the knowledge that I was aiding research to help people who were physically unable to do what I was doing. I understood that I had to continue and

be grateful for being able to embark on the challenge.

Fast fundraising

I signed up relatively late to the challenge, giving myself only three months to fundraise the required £2,650 needed to send me to Sweden. A pub quiz helped me raise over £400 and a stall at the East Finchley Christmas Fair, selling handmade goods, pulled in

over £350 worth of sponsorship. Before setting off on my sled in Sweden, I had raised almost £3,000, which is equal to 120 hours' worth of medical research.

Rosanna, who lives in Gurney Drive, N2, would still welcome donations for Spinal Research UK. You can donate at <http://virginmoneygiving.com/RosannaRafel>

New chemist on High Road

By Sheila Armstrong

The Oakdale Pharmacy is under new management. Herman and Simone Benjamin took over the shop, located between Iceland and Budgens, in November. Herman has 20 years' experience in his family's pharmacy in the East End.

The couple told *The Archer* that the Christmas Festival was a good introduction to East Finchley and they had felt welcomed by the local community. They have retained the staff from the old Oakdale Pharmacy and many of the old customers. The shelves are fully stocked again and further improvements to the shop are planned.

Their aim is to have an independently run family pharmacy and to be in touch with the needs of their customers. If you can't find what you need on the shelves do ask and if possible they will order it for you.

They also run a prescription collection service for regular

medication with all the local GPs; they will text you when it arrives in store or it can even be delivered to you if necessary. They can also undertake medication check-ups and reviews. Additionally they have applied to be a Healthy Living Pharmacy, not only giving advice on eating and exercise but testing blood pressure and BMI.

Herman is also specialising in mobility for the elderly and is keen to make everyday living easier for them. He plans to carry a range of aids from wheelchairs to scooters and walking aids. The pharmacy is open from 9am until 6.30pm, and until 5.30pm on Saturdays.



Herman and Simone Benjamin, new owners of the Oakdale Pharmacy. Photo Mike Coles

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