

Rail industry supports Samaritans by getting active outdoors this summer

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The rail industry is supporting Samaritans to encourage people to sign up to the charity's virtual fundraiser, Samarathon, as rail staff get involved and set themselves the challenge of walking, jogging or running a marathon in July, helping Samaritans' volunteers to continue providing vital emotional support.

Launching in Mental Health Awareness Week, Samaritans is encouraging supporters to make the most of the long summer days after months of lockdown by getting active and being out in nature, which is known to help boost physical and mental wellbeing.

Participants can choose how, when and where they complete their marathon – and can sign up alongside friends and family, cheering each other on either in person or remotely.

Rail staff's Samarathon efforts will also contribute to Samaritans and the rail industry's 'Million Hour Challenge' including training and participation hours. The volunteering initiative aims to bring the rail industry together to help Samaritans be there for those struggling to cope, whilst also improving mental health and wellbeing within the rail industry. There are many ways for rail staff to get involved in the Challenge, including fundraising activities such as Samarathon or organising workplace tea events to

support staff wellbeing. Rail staff can log their hours at millionhourchallenge.com.

Olivia Cayley, Samaritans' head of rail programme, said: "We're so pleased to see the rail industry getting involved in our virtual fundraiser, Samarathon. In 2020, Samaritans volunteers spent over one million hours responding to calls for help during a very challenging time and the pandemic has shown that our services are needed now more than ever.

"Taking part in this challenge is not only a fun way to look after your own mental health and wellbeing, with rail staff being able to log hours towards the Million Hour Challenge, but will allow our amazing volunteers to continue to support anyone who may be struggling with theirs."

Pentalver Design Engineer, Laura Richards, took part in Samarathon last year to raise money for the charity and wants to encourage others to get involved this year.

Speaking about the fundraising challenge, Laura said: "I completed 40.78 miles, over approximately 10 hours and 31 minutes and raised £544.16! I found the walks to be a way to look after my own mental health, and cope with the daily stress of lockdown life. This made me push myself to exceed the 26.2-mile target and go as far as possible. Mental health is a topic that is incredibly important to me and that we need to continue to raise awareness of. I am truly grateful to G&W and everyone who sponsored me, and to my family for walking alongside me for some of the challenge. It was heart-warming to see that even in these tough times people still want to help those in need of support."

'Million Hour Challenge' launched in March 2019, building on Network Rail and the rail industry's partnership with Samaritans to reduce the number of suicides on the railway and support those affected. The challenge, which is running for five years and has just reached its two-year mark, has 30 rail partner organisations signed up, with opportunities for around 165,000 of their staff to support Samaritans' efforts.

Three UK is the official sponsor of Samarathon. Connectivity has never been more important and over the three-year partnership, Three UK and Samaritans will work together to expand services and help more people access emotional support, 24/7, 365 days a year.

To find more information or sign up to Samarathon, visit <https://samarathon.samaritans.org/>

Photo credit: Samaritans