

Raleigh International says thank you 30,000 volunteers on World Volunteer Day

Raleigh International, the charity that runs challenge and adventure expeditions, is celebrating the efforts of its 30,000 volunteers on 5 December 2007, World Volunteer Day.

Since the charity began in 1984 volunteers from diverse backgrounds and nationalities have joined expeditions in remote regions spanning five continents. The volunteers have included 16,185 young people between the ages of 17-24 from the UK and 2,325 from other countries; 2,746 volunteers from the host countries, as well as over 2000 young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. These volunteers have been supported by 7,737 qualified volunteer managers, aged 25 or over. In total, volunteers from over 80 nations around the world have worked with Raleigh International.

Raleigh's volunteers have been privileged to work in some of the world's most challenging and remote locations across a total of 45 countries; from Chile to Mongolia, and Siberia to Botswana. Today volunteers have the opportunity to work in Costa Rica and Nicaragua, Malaysian Borneo or, from 2008, the Southern states of India.

The 30,000 volunteers have assisted local people in some of the remotest areas of the world by working on environment and community projects. The latter includes constructing over 700 schools, building playgrounds, community centres and clinics. Our volunteers have constructed bridges across canyons and installed gravity water feed systems which have provided rural villages with their first drop of fresh running water.

The environmental projects have seen Raleigh volunteers working with host communities to make a positive and genuine difference to the ecology of the host country. Projects have included building facilities for scientists and park rangers and constructing infrastructure for eco-tourism, such as nature trails in national parks.

All of Raleigh's projects are developed and delivered in partnership with government ministries, NGO's and local communities to ensure sustainable development. These have involved establishing facilities which promote employment or vocational skills training, and education or activities that promote alternative means of income generation which do not contribute to environmental degradation.

"Volunteering with Raleigh is not just about giving your time, or professional skills," commented Stacey Adams chief executive. "It's also about giving a piece of yourself; the real success of a Raleigh International expedition lies in the personal journey that each individual takes as they tackle their weaknesses and rise to new challenges, supported by the rest of their team."

"The positive effect that we believe our volunteers have on the host country has been borne out by a recent academic study by Bryan Mitchell at the University of Birmingham," Adams added.

"He concludes that Raleigh volunteers help rural communities come together working towards a common goal, and this helps those in the host country gain confidence. We always ensure that our volunteers work alongside the local community to provide them with wanted and sustainable facilities that the whole community can benefit from in the future."

ENDS

Notes to editors

Raleigh International works with local NGOs, communities and government ministries in all of its expedition countries

Raleigh International's expeditions are open to 'venturers' aged 17 to 24 and 'volunteer managers' aged 25 and over, from the UK and abroad. Raleigh International runs approximately 10 expeditions a year – to Malaysia, Costa Rica and Nicaragua, as well as the exciting new expedition to India adding to the list of far-flung destinations from February 2008.

As a registered charity Raleigh International is completely dependent on fundraising activities and as such asks all venturers and volunteer managers to contribute towards the charity's work and expenses through fundraising. Venturers are asked to raise £2,995 for ten weeks, £2,250 for seven weeks, £1,750 for five weeks and £1,500 for a four-week expedition, while volunteer managers are asked to raise £1,950 for a 13 week expedition and £1,350 for an eight week expedition.

Raleigh International is a leading expert in structured gap year expeditions and one of the very first organisations to self-assess and certify itself as BS8848 compliant, the new British Standard for overseas expedition safety.

Venturers, volunteer managers and members of Raleigh International's staff are available for interview and comment. High-resolution images are also readily available. For more information about Raleigh International, please contact Anne Consedine on 0781 804 8438 at anne.consedine@raleigh.org.uk or visit www.raleighinternational.org