

Media release



Westpac Rescue staff swap wings for wheels in Le Race

Westpac Air Rescue staff competing in Le Race next week hope that they won't be needing their colleagues when they take on the 100km cycling race from Christchurch to Akaroa.

The Air Rescue Trust has been selected as the charity of choice for Le Race and four staff members will be teaming up to fly the flag for their respected flying medical service.

Le Race Event Manager Sheree Stevens said even though she hoped that none of the competitors on March 24 will need an aerial evacuation, the Air Rescue Trust was a great organisation for the cyclists to support.

"Our competitors cover a lot of tricky terrain, just like cyclists around the South Island each week, and it is good to know that these fantastic people are ready to come to the rescue if required," says Stevens.

Three pilots and one nurse will be part of the race to show their appreciation for the event's support from for the Air Rescue Trust.

Helicopter Pilot Matt Boulcott will be riding on behalf of the helicopter crews, while the New Zealand Flying Doctor Service is represented by pilot Rupert McLachlan, Flight Nurse Nurse Francine Buick and former pilot Grant Mitchell.

The foursome has been clocking up the hours to be well prepared for the 100km slog across the Banks Peninsula hills, and Rupert McLachlan says it has not been easy to fit the training in with their busy rosters.

"All my training now needs to fit around shift work and my kids, so I just ride whenever I can," says Rupert, who still manages to fit in a very respectable 300km each week.

Amazingly, in between training and work he still finds time to groom a possible future star of Le Race. "I love riding with my four-year-old, he loves getting out on his mountain bike."

Since the Air Rescue Service was formed in 1989, it has completed over 10,000 rescues, with nearly half of those for motor accidents, leisure activities and other accident, including cyclists who may have taken a tumble.

Cyclists who compete in Le Race can make a donation when they register or are invited to enter teams to fundraise for the Air Rescue Service, which requires \$7 million to stay in the air each year.

“We are fortunate we have a generous community behind us,” says Christine Prince, CEO of the Air Rescue Service. “We are only 50% government funded, so our community are our main supporters – businesses and individuals that keep the Westpac Rescue Helicopter in the air. We want to thank all of those who have donated or are fundraising as part of Le Race and we wish you all the best for race day.”

And even if you do not want to get on your bike on March 24, you can support the cycling pilots and nurse by donating at the [Race for Rescue Give-a-Little](#) page.

Le Race starts in Cathedral Square on March 24 and finishes in Akaroa.



Captions:

Rupert & Francine in front of our NZFD KingAir plane.

Matt & Graeme (was competing but has pulled out due to an injury competing in Coast to Coast) in front of the Westpac Rescue Helicopter.

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