

Roxanne McKee becomes a mermaid for Swimathon 2008 in aid of Marie Curie Cancer Care Hollyoaks star, Roxanne McKee, launches Swimathon 2008 along with Aquabatix underwater models in aid of Marie Curie Cancer Care across the UK today. Swimathon, the largest swimming fundraising event in the world, will take place from the 17th-20th April 2008 at over 500 pools throughout the UK.

Roxanne states: 'by signing up for Swimathon 2008 you can achieve your New Year's resolution of looking good and feeling good whilst helping Marie Curie Cancer Care to make a difference to the lives of tens of thousands of terminally ill patients.'

Now in its 22nd year, almost half a million swimmers have taken part in Swimathon; swimming the equivalent of over 24 times round the world and raising over £30 million for charity.

In 2008, 19,000 people are expected to 'Swim the Challenge' to raise £1.8 million for Marie Curie Cancer Care and The Swimathon Foundation. Marie Curie Cancer Care provides high quality nursing, totally free to give terminally ill patients the choice of dying at home supported by their families. As well as providing a home nursing service, the charity runs 10 Marie Curie Hospices which actively promote the best quality of life for people with cancer and other illnesses, completely free. In addition, the charity also runs the world-renowned Marie Curie Research Institute, which investigates the causes and treatments of cancer

The campaign is being supported by Celia Birtwell, one of the UK's leading designers. Celia Birtwell has created 30 uniquely flattering, limited-edition swimming costumes to help encourage individuals to join Swimathon and help make this year's event, the biggest event ever.

Duncan Goodhew, Olympic Gold medallist and president of The Swimathon Foundation, comments: 'Swimming is a great overall workout. It uses every muscle group in the body whilst burning more calories than other activities, such as running, and is one of the government's targeted sports to reduce obesity. Swimathon is not only a great form of exercise for all, but a great team activity for friends, families and colleagues.'

Roxanne McKee adds, 'I love the idea of a group of friends or colleagues getting together to train for Swimathon – having a fun, calorie-burning swimming session before relaxing in the sauna! And what better way to achieve a fitness goal than taking part in a Swimathon challenge and, if you're a woman, doing it in style in one of Celia Birtwell's stunning creations?'

Swimathon 2008 is open to everyone, encouraging people to set their own personal challenge by accomplishing a distance of their choice. 1.5K for those who swims occasionally, 2.5K for the intermediate swimmer - and the ultimate 5K challenge, which requires at least six weeks of training. For those interested in joining forces with friends, colleagues or family, the 5K challenge can also be completed as part of a team of up to five people or, if you prefer to do it all at your own pace, join the SimplySwim challenge, which allows you to cover any distance at any pool, any time.

To find out more about Swimathon, sign-up for the 2008 challenge or for the chance to win one of Celia Birtwell's unique swimming costumes, go to: www.swimathon.org

To find out more about Marie Curie Cancer Care, please visit www.mariecurie.org.uk.