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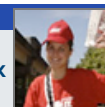
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Rallying call for ambulance

6:10pm Sunday 22nd February 2009

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By [Thom Airs](#) »

An ageing Oxford ambulance is set to answer a special call by travelling 10,000 miles to Mongolia.

Two friends from the city will join two others to drive the vehicle across 15 countries in a month to raise £10,000 for Oxford's Douglas House hospice.

The nine-year-old ambulance, which has already clocked up 100,000 miles, has been donated to the fundraisers by South Central Ambulance Service and will be put back into service once it reaches Mongolia.

Behind the wheel on the epic trip will be friends Nick Hawkins, 24, from North Oxford, and George Crowther, 24, from Headington, Oxford, Matt Davis, 24, from Southampton, and Dave Andrews, 25, from London.

The team will join dozens of others taking part in the 2009 Mongol Rally in the summer.

Mr Hawkins, who is currently studying law at the Oxford Institute of Legal Practice, said: "We chose an ambulance because we want to raise money and generate awareness for Douglas House.

"We could have done it in a normal car, but we wanted to generate awareness and do something different.

"Hopefully, over the next few months, people will recognise us driving around Oxford and will stop and chat to us about what we are doing."

The team hope to raise £10,000 for the hospice in Magdalen Road.

Mr Hawkins said: "I live locally and I know about the work done by Douglas House.

"It's a charity that's specifically for young adults, and I'm in that bracket, so I can relate to it.

"Like many charities, they are struggling with the credit crunch, so hopefully we will be able to help.

"We are hoping to raise £10,000, but if we break that we will keep on going."

Asked whether the ambulance, which has been stripped of its siren and flashing lights, was up to the challenge, he added: "There's not a huge amount of work that needs doing. It's in good condition.

"We are just going to take things as they come. We don't really know what we are letting ourselves in for.

"We have a general route, but we'll be pretty much making it up as we go along.



Matt Davis, left, and Nick Hawkins get the keys from Paul Cooke of the ambulance service

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"We don't know exactly what problems we'll face, but we are prepared for anything."

William Hancock, SCAS's chief executive, said: "When our vehicles reach the end of their useful life, they are usually disposed of through the used-vehicle trade as scrap. Their value is very little and certainly does not reflect potential continuing use.

"We are delighted to be able to make this vehicle available for the Mongol Rally, especially since it is also a way of supporting a very worthy local Oxford charity."

The team is looking for sponsors and donations.

For more details visit thedouglascar.com

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