

50 friends swim in 17 counties over 38 hours for "loyal and fun" friend in a coma

Pádraig Schaler was injured when he was knocked off his bike at Cape Cod. His friends are raising money to help his parents pay for his treatment.

A GROUP OF almost 50 friends will swim in 17 counties across Ireland over 38 hours to raise money for their friend who is in a coma after a tragic accident.

Pádraig Schaler is a hugely popular 23-year-old who is currently in Germany receiving rehabilitative neurological care after being knocked from his bike and injured in Cape Cod last summer.



Pádraig Schaler

Image: Reinhard Schaler

Swim for Pádraig

In testament to his popularity, his friends have organised Swim for Pádraig, a fundraising swim on his behalf.

They have already raised €22,500, which will go towards the treatment of the talented Dublin swimmer and passionate Gaeilgeoir.

The swimmers will travel around Ireland over 38 hours from today to tomorrow (12 – 13 April), brazing freezing waters to swim in every county with a coast.

Pádraig had just completed his undergraduate studies in Trinity College Dublin, where he was studying Irish and History.

He was brought home to Ireland by his parents after two weeks in intensive care in the US, and his parents then made the decision to move him to Germany.

His father, Reinhard, told us the reasons behind this move in an interview last week.

Event organiser, Aodhan Ó Deá, said that Pádraig is an excellent swimmer, so this event is "the perfect way to honour him".

The event is also being organised through Irish and English, in tribute to Pádraig's passion for the language.

Passionate and stubborn

"Pádraig is the type of guy who'd be first in line organising something like this," said Ó

Dea, who was inspired to organise this event after setting up something similar – on a much smaller scale – two years ago.

Ó Dea met Padraig when he was his cinnire at Irish college. They stayed in touch through Conradh na Gaeilge events, as Pádraig was involved in national campaigns and the Conradh's radio station.

"This is the kind of event he would have loved, he loves swimming," said Ó Dea. "He is a big advocate for the Irish language."

Ó Dea has visited his friend in hospital in Germany, and said it was "difficult" seeing him., but added: "There's a proper health system over there – the doctors are very hopeful. There's light at the end of the tunnel."

Someone that loves life

Caoimhe Ní Mhuilleoir has been a friend of Pádraig's since they lived at at Scéim Chónaithe na Mac Léinn, the accommodation for Irish speakers at Trinity College Dublin.

They were also in the Irish language society together. "He is incredibly passionate about Irish," said Ní Mhuilleoir. "He achieved a lot of things for the Irish language in Trinity."

She described Pádraig as "someone that loves life".

When you were with Pádraig, you knew you were going to have a great time no matter what you're doing.

She said that his popularity is "just incredible" and described him as "very loyal and almost stubborn".

Ní Mhuilleoir said the challenge is going "to be very hard, very cold, very miserable" but she is happy to do anything to help her friend and his family.

Another friend of Pádraig's, Oisín Mistéil, said of the swim: "It's a testament to just how many friends he has in so many different circles."

So many people have been touched by Pádraig and his friendly demeanour and his innate likeability.

He described Pádraig as "very positive". "He doesn't see barriers like other people. If he wants something, he will go get it regardless of things that would put other people off."

He also lived in the same accommodation as Pádraig in Trinity, and travelled on a J1 visa to the USA with him. It was Pádraig who taught him how to swim during one trip to San Diego.

A special fund has been set up, Caring for Pádraig and all donations to Snámh Phádraig will go towards the costs of Pádraig's care.

People can sponsor a swimmer at this link. You can learn more about Pádraig at www.caringforpadraig.org or at Pádraig's father, Reinhard Schäler's blog www.hospi-tales.com.

Read: **"It's agony": Pádraig is in a coma – his family say Ireland's healthcare system has failed him** (<http://www.thejournal.ie/padraig-schaler-accident-coma-family-1398359-Apr2014/>) >

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