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Heart attack inspires nurse's charity challenge

At 3pm on 18 August last year paramedics shocked Tania Hanson's heart back into rhythm after she suffered a cardiac arrest.

Hours later the full-time nurse had another cardiac arrest in Jersey's Intensive Care Unit resulting in her being flown to the UK to undergo surgery at John Radcliffe Hospital.

For some, the date of their near-death experience would not be something they would want to dwell on. However, Tania is determined to mark the milestone by undertaking a charity challenge which she hopes will finish exactly a year to the minute of the anniversary of her heart attack.

Tania, who lives with partner Neil in Havre des Pas, is currently training for a 47 mile walk around the island in aid of the Jersey branch of the British Heart Foundation.

"I'm doing it a year to the day to prove to myself and other people that there is life after a heart attack," Tania, a day surgery and main theatres staff nurse at Jersey General Hospital, said. "I wanted to give something back. The British Heart Foundation in Jersey does amazing work."

Tania was enjoying a typical Saturday when she fell ill and credits her nurses' training with the fact she knew she was having a heart attack.

"I had driven to M&S on Saturday afternoon and arriving back home I felt a sharp pain," she said. "I knew straight away what it was. I thought: 'This is not indigestion'. I managed to walk close to home and went into the public toilets nearby as I felt queasy.

"As I came out I felt really light-headed and collapsed on the Dicq Slip. A man who had been cleaning the toilets lifted me up and I asked him to call an ambulance and to tell them I was having a heart attack. A kitchen porter who I knew from the White Horse came out and I asked him to get my partner.

"I felt so calm. I didn't worry as I knew everything had been put in place. When the paramedics Nathan and Sarah arrived they got me into the back of the ambulance straight away. Fifteen seconds later I had a cardiac arrest. I'm very thankful to them – they were superb. I was so lucky to be in the right place at the right time. Things could have been very different, I'm very aware of that."

Tania was admitted to Jersey's Intensive Care Unit but after suffering another cardiac arrest she was transferred to Oxford's John Radcliffe Hospital where she had a stent surgically fitted to her heart. Her operation was a success and days later she was well enough to return to Jersey.

Determined to get fit and healthy, Tania, who was recently awarded the Jersey Heart Hero Award by the island's branch of the British Heart Foundation, committed to months of rehabilitation as well as to improving her diet and quitting smoking.

"I've had a second chance at life and I don't want to muck it up," Tania, who has returned to work full-time, said. "It was up to me to do my rehab, to sort my diet out. I thought it would be hard to give up smoking but it wasn't. Being a nurse I knew smoking was a contributory factor and that I would be silly if I didn't turn my life around."

She added: "I'm so grateful to my family, friends and colleagues at the Hospital for their continued support throughout my recovery."

Now back to full fitness Tania is training for her charity walk which will start at midnight on 18 August from Havre des Pas. She will walk clockwise around the island and hopes to finish at the Dicq Slip at 3pm.

"I wanted to do something to challenge myself," Tania said. "Every weekend I'm pushing myself to walk a little bit further. I'm slightly nervous because I don't want to fail but I'm also looking forward to it as I want to give something back."

To sponsor Tania visit www.justgiving.com and search Toots Hanson.