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### **Somerset students raise money to support the region's spinal centre**

A Millfield student who sustained a spinal cord injury after a cycling accident has returned to the spinal centre that cared for him to present a donation of equipment and a cheque to the charity that supports the centre.

17 year old Edmund Rhind-Tutt from Sutton Mallet near Bridgwater raised the money with fellow pupils and staff at Millfield School and Strode College. A series of concerts and events were organised and over £5,000 was raised. The majority of the funds were used to purchase physiotherapy equipment for the Duke of Cornwall Spinal Treatment Centre in Salisbury with the remaining £1000 being donated to the Southern Spinal Injuries Trust, the charity that supports the Centre and people with spinal cord injury in the South and South West.

Edmund's life changed in July 2010 when he came off his bike while on a cycling holiday in the French Alps sustaining an incomplete injury to the lower back. Temporarily paralysed from the waist down, Edmund was operated on in France and then transferred to hospital in Taunton. He moved to the Duke of Cornwall Spinal Treatment Centre in August for specialist rehabilitation and after four months of expert care he was able to walk out of the Centre on crutches.

Talking about his accident Edmund said: "Being in the Spinal Centre has taught me a lot but mostly it's made me realise that I was very lucky. The majority of people in Salisbury will never walk again and face a tough future. The care I received at the Centre was amazing and it's great to be able to give something back."

The majority of the funds raised were used to purchase a Balance Trainer which helps spinal cord injured patients stand and challenge their balance by moving their body in a supported manner thereby helping to recruit core muscle when able. Edmund had used the machine during physiotherapy at Salisbury when it was being trialled and realised that it would be a valuable addition to the Physiotherapy Department. While visiting the Centre he demonstrated the machine catching a ball thrown to him at either side.

Rachael Coulson, Physiotherapist at the Spinal Centre said: "This is such a generous gift and it's a valuable addition to the Physiotherapy Department. To date patients' standing balance tended to be challenged in a static standing frame but this allows them to lean further and work harder in all directions in a safe environment and that makes a real difference."

Accepting the £1000 cheque SSIT Trustee Jeremy Major commented: “We are very grateful for this generous donation and extend our thanks to everyone involved in the fundraising. It’s wonderful to see Edmund back on his feet and we wish him the very best as his mobility continues to improve.”

An accomplished musician and linguist, Edmund plans to pick up his A level studies in September when he moves to Strode College.

## **Ends**

**Picture Credit:** Edmund Rhind-Tutt demonstrates the Balance Trainer presented to the Physiotherapy Department at the Duke of Cornwall Spinal Treatment Centre in Salisbury with fellow pupils and staff from Millfield School and Strode College.

## **Notes to Editors**

**The Southern Spinal Injuries Trust (SSIT)** is a regional charity that supports the Duke of Cornwall Spinal Treatment Centre in Salisbury and people with spinal cord injury living in the South and South West of England. SSIT helps fund equipment for the Spinal Centre and also provides grants for individuals to purchase specialist equipment needed for an independent life.

SSIT’s current focus is the fund the building of a rehabilitation garden – the **Jubilee Garden** – at the Spinal Centre which will give patients a much-needed outside social area as well as offering them the chance to use gardening as part of their rehabilitation.

**The Duke of Cornwall Spinal Treatment Centre** in Salisbury provides specialist care following a spinal cord injury. Patients come from all over the South and South West of England and the average length of stay is nine months.

Further information from:

Sue Hall ([sue.hall@ssit.org.uk](mailto:sue.hall@ssit.org.uk))

T: 01985 841194