

Courageous ECHO Teens conquer London's O2

A group of ECHO Teens bravely climbed to the top of London's O2 to raise money for ECHO, demonstrating what they can achieve whilst living with a heart condition - and just how amazing they are!

Twenty-one young people aged from 11-18 year took on the challenge of climbing up and over The O2 in London on Wednesday 31 May. Suspended two metres above the surface of The O2 roof, the walkway is 52 metres high which is taller than Niagara Falls. At its steepest point the walkway has an incline 30 degrees.

Fourteen year-old ECHO Teen Chey, took part in the event, cheered on by her father Darul. At the age of 5, Chey was diagnosed with Patent Ductus Arteriosus, a condition that meant her blood wasn't flowing properly between two major arteries connected to her heart, putting strain on her heart and lungs. She also had a leak in a heart valve. Chey was operated on at Evelina London when she was five years old, and has been in the care of the hospital ever since.

Chey said: "It was really fun to do this. I was nervous at first as I don't get to do things like this often. I loved the experience and I would do it again. My mum only let me as there were medical professionals there. I love sharing moments like this with my heart friends, I love the ECHO family"

Chey's dad, Darul, explains how important it is for young people living with heart conditions to spend time together: "All these children with heart conditions were fearless in their quest to climb The O2. Medical issues may have brought them together but it was their vision of seeing themselves at the summit, which gave them both the passion and the strength to do it. When these children come together as a whole, it's not about their health, it's about teaming up with their heart family and having a great time. These kids are just kids when they are together, and that's the beauty of these activities, the kids have fun without worrying about any medical issue they may have. These kids are giants, and I'm proud to have one as my daughter, they are all inspirational, each and every one."

The brave young people who took on The O2 climb included a mixture of heart patients and their friends and families. Volunteers supporting the event included nurses, youth workers and parents, alongside the ECHO team.