

Two ladies of Speen go out of their way to raise money for Helen and Douglas House

The Story

When we tell people what we are doing, everyone has a different reaction. Some are excited and encouraging with a “good for you” attitude, some are a little more reserved and reticent about our ability to



do it while others just laugh. However, one thing everyone is in agreement about is that the charity we are raising money for is an extremely worthwhile cause.

Many of you will be familiar with the work of Helen & Douglas House, a hospice for children and young adults in Oxford, as it is one of the five hospices we have supported over the last seven years

through our fundraising activities with Speen Supporters' Group.

Helen House was established in 1982 by Sister Frances Dominica and was the world's first children's hospice and became the blueprint for children's hospices around the world. In 2004 Douglas House was opened for teenagers and young adults.

Helen & Douglas House provide respite and palliative care and end of life care to children and young adults with life-shortening conditions, offering personal and practical support to their families. The care is modelled on that provided in the family home - living life to the full, whatever the circumstances. Even after many years of fundraising for the hospice, it is difficult to convey what a positive and supportive environment they provide for children and their families in the most difficult of circumstances.

For some time we had talked about taking on a personal challenge, so when we heard that Helen & Douglas House were organising a sponsored bike ride we just had to go for it.

Shelley:

“In December 2007 I reached

the grand old/young age of 50 and decided that it was time to challenge myself in some way and if I could combine that challenge with the opportunity to raise some money for a charity I am personally involved with, so much better. So, when Christine phoned me and told me about the bike ride I think I shocked her when I said, without pause, ‘Let's go for it!!’

Of course, taking part in this bike ride will give us the opportunity to see some of the wonderful sights and scenery in Vietnam and Cambodia but it's going to be an uphill struggle. We will be cycling an average of 75km a day in hot and humid conditions with much of the route on dirt and gravel tracks. For those who have enjoyed a happy relationship with their bike this may not seem too onerous but I have to admit that, as a 50 year old, I have never owned a bike or done any cycling beyond the odd couple of miles along a towpath in France one year, so to call me a novice is an understatement - hence the personal challenge. Sometimes the largest commitments we make are made spontaneously because they involve something you know you have to do.