

Nominee's Name:

**Rachel Oakley**

Organisation Name:

Everyone Active

Your Nominee's place of work:

**Everyone Active – Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre**

Please provide a narrative (600 words max) about your nominee in the space below:

Rachel Oakley's activity journey started in May 2016 – aged 50 and weighing in at 14 and a half stone, she was suffering the consequences of her 'Lazy Forties'. Working long hours in an office had encouraged a sedentary lifestyle, and Rachel was fully aware of the effects this was having on her health.

After reading about the damaging effects of an inactive lifestyle, and seeing frightening words such as "diabetes" and "obesity", Rachel was scared about what the future could hold. It was time to take action.

After her job came to an end, Rachel got a window of opportunity to make a change and made the decision to start her journey to a healthier lifestyle. She began by setting a target of losing five stone over the course of two years. Having previously been a member, Rachel came back to Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre and sought the support of Personal Trainer, Di Knights, to help her achieve her goals. Di formulated a plan to enable Rachel to lose her weight in a sustainable and healthy manner. Together, Rachel and Di not only looked at the activity she was completing but also her diet, including encouraging a more balanced and rounded eating plan.

After enjoying her personal training sessions and being encouraged by the gradual improvements to her health and body shape, Rachel decided to give running a go. Slowly, Rachel built up her distance, initially training on a route she thought was 5kms but turned out to be 5 miles. This gave Rachel the confidence to push herself even further. Her new-found love for running meant that Rachel's distance began to improve and she was eager to try something new. Having never learnt to swim, she decided to undergo lessons – initially starting in the beginner group, before developing to intermediate level.

Her enthusiasm and determination led Rachel to achieve her weight loss target in just 18 months and she has continued to challenge herself to improve. She completed her first triathlon last year (2017), and has set her sights on more events, including taking part in her first half marathon. Rachel's next goal is to complete the Great East Swim and then build up to a mammoth 15km swim/walk around the Scilly isles in September 2018, with the hope to develop further and give OTILLO a go.

Rachel's improved levels of fitness have also helped others. She completed a 100-mile gym challenge for the Poppy appeal which raised around £700.

Events such as this have given Rachel the opportunity to encourage more people to become more active – her friends and fellow gym members even joined her for her gruelling gym challenge. She also helps to inspire newcomers of the local Suffolk running club, as she shares her own experiences of being a 'newbie' to the world on running.

Throughout Rachel's journey she has overcome a number of challenges, continuing to be motivated whilst coping with Torticollis, Scoliosis and Lordosis. These conditions cause Rachel a lot of stiffness

and makes some activities and planes of movement more challenging. Rachel overcomes these challenges by working closely with instructors and by adapting activities and exercises to best suit her individual needs.

Rachel now sees an active and healthy lifestyle as a way of life. A great way not only to keep active and better herself, but also contribute to the community through fundraising and supporting and inspiring others to achieve their goals too.