

Dragons' Den star in a call to arms



VIP VISIT: The Herald's Helen Pearse, Clair Skelley and editor Bill Martin, chairman of Plymouth and West Devon NSPCC Sam Doel, chairman of the South West Child Voice Appeal Deborah Meaden, children's services manager for Childline Cheryl Marshall and community fundraising manager for the NSPCC Alison Armer



PLLB20110113B-009



PLLB20110113B-003



PLLB20110113B-005



PLLB20110113B-011



PLLB20110113B-001

MOTIVATOR: Deborah Meaden gives a talk, above and left; Members of the audience, above right; Above left, Deborah with Bambino's owner Alison Lane, directors Jemma Honey and Sara Caldwell; Far left, City College Plymouth's Fay Steer and Sharron Robbie chat to Deborah Meaden

DRAGONS' Den star Deborah Meaden has issued a rallying cry to Plymouth businesses taking on a charity challenge.

The TV celebrity and entrepreneur said The Herald's Dragon's Challenge in aid of the NSPCC will make a life-changing difference to local children in crisis.

She spoke during a special reception at Brickfields rugby ground in Devonport last night.

More than 20 city businesses are taking part in the initiative to raise money for the NSPCC's South West Child's Voice Appeal - which will help fund the region's ChildLine centre.

Each company has pledged to raise at least £5,000 by the end of March.

Speaking at last night's event, Deborah thanked everyone who has signed up to the challenge for their "fantastic" efforts and urged them to continue raising as much as possible.

She explained how she was inspired to support the charity by vis-

iting ChildLine's regional call centre in Exeter.

by DIANA PRINCE
Herald Reporter

"I stepped into a world where I actually started believing in angels again," she said. "All of the people who work in that centre are angels."

"They deal with the most difficult situations in the most heartwarming and caring way. It changes these children's lives."

"Raising the funds is the easy bit. The people on the end of the phones dealing with children in often dire situations, they've got the difficult job."

Counsellors at ChildLine's regional base in Exeter answered 5,046 calls in 2009/10.

However, up to a third of calls go unanswered because there are not enough volunteer counsellors.

The South West centre needs to recruit about 35 volunteers a year, and it costs £1,600 to train each one.

Deborah said: "I'm blown away by

how many people have become engaged in the challenge. There is fantastic, wonderful work. Please really, really go for it."

"The key for me at the end of this appeal is the genuine difference it will have made to the kids of this region."

Among other people at the reception were The Herald editor Bill Martin, Alison Armer from the NSPCC and Cheryl Marshall from ChildLine in Exeter.

Cheryl, children's services manager for ChildLine in the South West, said: "Money raised will help recruit, train and support increasing numbers of volunteers who will be there on the lines to make sure calls do get through every time. The challenges that some of these young children face are huge."

"Whatever you are doing to sup-

port Childline, you can be absolutely sure that it is directly helping a child or young person in crisis in their lives."

She said that over the Christmas period, volunteers took calls from children and young people in "absolutely tragic" circumstances, some in the process of committing suicide.

The NSPCC launched the Child's Voice Appeal in 2008 to raise £50million nationally to answer more cries for help through its national services.

A total of £1.6million is needed in the South West alone and so far the total raised is around £900,000.

The Dragon's Challenge was launched in October.

The business that collects the most money will spend a day with Deborah.

PLYMOUTH VALUATION DAYS

We are accepting consignments for our Forthcoming Auctions

- Paintings
- Jewellery
- Furniture
- Silver
- Ceramics
- Toys

FREE VALUATION DAY
Monday to Thursday 9.00am to 12 noon
At our salerooms, No appointment needed

www.plymouthauctions.co.uk

Plymouth Auction Rooms

Faraday Mill Trade Park, Cattedown, PL4 0SE - T: 01752 254740