



## Watercress Festival Funds to Help Hampshire's Health



GMTV presenter John Stapleton was presented with a cheque for more than £20,600 from Hampshire and Dorset watercress farmers, who raised money for Lynn's Bowel Cancer Campaign from activities during National Watercress Week.

The charity was founded by John's wife, Lynn Faulds Wood, a bowel cancer survivor and former TV Watchdog presenter. Pictured presenting the cheque are Kip Winter Cox of Alresford Salads and Huw Griffiths of Vitacress Salads, members of The Watercress Alliance, the driving force behind The Watercress Festival, which was held in Alresford last month.

The reason for the charity link up is that watercress contains high levels of a compound called phenylethyl isothiocyanate, or PEITC, which in scientific studies has been shown to increase the body's potential to resist certain carcinogenic agents. More than 8,000 visitors attended the Watercress Festival helping to raise £3,834 in the charity collection tins. TV children's favourite, Keith Chegwin, contributed to the fun by auctioning off merchandise signed by celebrities. The Watercress Alliance donated a further £10,000 with another contribution of £6,768 from Sainsbury's, which donated five pence from every bag of watercress sold during National Watercress Week. Ocado, whose stall on the Watercress Festival food market offered festival go-ers the opportunity to 'cycle your own smoothie' raised £130.

The Watercress Alliance, comprising Alresford Salads, Vitacress Salads and The Watercress Company, has been funding a two-year research project by the University of Ulster to establish the effect of regularly eating watercress upon one's likelihood of developing

colorectal cancer. The research, led by Professor Ian Rowland at the University of Ulster, Coleraine, and due to be published in the journal Nutrition and Cancer, has found that watercress extracts can beneficially impact key stages of carcinogenesis, the process that results in cancer.

Money raised will help fund the Faster Diagnosis Programme, which will be piloted locally by specialist Mike Thompson at The Queen Alexandra Hospital in Portsmouth. The Programme's computer assisted diagnosis software will enable GPs to know, within a couple of minutes, the risk of someone with symptoms of bowel cancer and to decide safely who to refer for hospital investigation. GPs are inundated with people with bowel symptoms. It is the single biggest reason for going to our doctor and currently one in five people with bowel cancer suffers a year's delay or more before diagnosis, a desperate delay which costs thousands of lives over the years.

"We have been delighted to get involved with the Watercress Alliance and the festival for lots of reasons," says Lynn "Watercress is delicious but also incredibly good for the body, with this recent research revealing its potential. It's great to support a home-grown industry and the festival helped to raise awareness of bowel cancer, which is the second biggest cancer killer in the UK."

Watercress has been grown in the pure spring waters of Hampshire and Dorset since the 1800s and is literally brimming with essential vitamins and minerals. For ideas and ways to incorporate the natural superfood in your daily diet, log on to [www.watercress.co.uk](http://www.watercress.co.uk).

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