

Colin is the inspiration behind raising £600,000

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LIFE in a wheelchair hasn't stopped a Herefordshire man living life to the maximum.

Colin Javens, paralysed in a swimming accident in 2000, has just handed over a cheque for £110,000 to charity – bringing the total he's helped raise to a staggering £640,000 in just five years.

A big chunk of the money will go for research into spinal injuries, but others have benefited too.

Colin, who is 29, said: "I'm a total realist – it's important to raise funds for research but it's important to live your life as fully as possible without holding out for a miracle cure."

His latest bout of fundraising ended last month when Colin and his mother, Val, handed the £110,000 cheque to the International Spinal Research Trust (ISRT).

The pair launched their own affiliated charity, the Spinal Research West Midlands Branch (WMB) in 2007, and

raised funds through several high-profile events. But it's just the tip of a fundraising iceberg.

Colin has led an inspirational life since breaking his neck in a diving accident in July 2000. A keen sportsman, who played rugby for Aylestone High, his life changed forever when he jumped into shallow water off the Isle of Wight.

The student was paralysed from the shoulders down and spent a year in Stoke Mandeville Hospital before returning to agricultural college. But his time in hospital and taste for adventure led to the journey of a lifetime – and he achieved a world-first in November 2005 by completing a driving expedition to South Africa.

Colin, who was born in Kenya, organised the "Driving Home" expedition in 2005 to raise funds for several charities. The five-man expedition left Britain in November 2005, and the two cars reached Cape Town the following April, after 165 days and 22,000 kilometres.

Colin drove using hand controls and his journey was a world-first for someone with his level of disability.

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▲ Colin Javens with his mum Val. Picture by David Griffiths. 090309-2

Inspirational Colin

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It also raised £320,000 for a research centre at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, £180,000 for the ISRT, while the rest went to disability projects in Africa.

The trek inspired Colin and his mother to launch their own charity, helped by a fundraising committee of eight.

"It's been my dream to drive to Kenya since I moved here when I was six, and I was really thrilled to do that," he said.

"But the main catalyst was meeting all the charities en route. I wanted to continue helping but I also started

thinking about the bigger picture and spinal research - that's why we set up WMB."

The pair launched WMB with a fundraising committee and organised dinners at Lord's Cricket Ground and the Emirates' Stadium, while friends ran the London Marathon and climbed Kilimanjaro.

The charity was planned as a two-year operation and the pair are now taking a break. Val works at the Primary Care Trust in Belmont, while Colin gives talks at schools and is planning a career in accessible tourism.

Colin isn't looking for a miracle cure - he wants the disabled to lead normal lives and, while they hope the funds raised may help scientists find a cure, they are not holding out for a miracle.

Nevertheless, Val is proud of their achievements.

"This contribution will enable scientists to search for a cure for spinal cord injuries, but it wouldn't have been possible without the help of so many people in Herefordshire," she said.

"We owe all those involved a huge amount of thanks for supporting our cause.