



Community Games Relay heads to Birmingham

Residents from Walkers Heath in Birmingham are being given the chance to re-live the Olympic Torch Relay celebrations one year on, thanks to Community Games.

Community Games is an Olympic and Paralympic Games legacy programme funded by the Social Action Fund and delivered by the County Sports Partnership Network (CSPN) and the YMCA.

On the one-year-anniversary of the Olympic Torch's arrival to the city, Birmingham Sport and Physical Activity Partnership (BSPAP) are celebrating the legacy created by London 2012 through the national Community Games Relay.

As part of the Relay's 70-day virtual journey across England, it will shine a spotlight on Birmingham on Thursday June 27 - day 40 of the route.

Celebrations will take place at the once derelict Walkers Heath Park, in the south side of the city, which has been transformed from forgotten wasteland to a thriving part of community life – thanks to the Community Games programme.

The Community Games Relay will celebrate 18-year-old Craig Smith who has worked tirelessly in his community to bring sport and cultural activities to others.

He has been honoured as a 'Shining Light' for Birmingham and will be presented with a commemorative jersey by Leanne Youngson, from the Friends of Walkers Heath Park, who was the recipient of the BBC West Midlands' 'Newcomer of the Year' award in sport, last year.

Craig is one of 70 people being awarded the prestigious 'Shining Light' status during the Relay.

Debbie Deane, Physical Activity and Community Games Officer from BSPAP, said:

"It is an honour to award Craig for the role he has played in helping others to enjoy sport and cultural activities through the Community Games programme.

Craig is an inspiration to lots of other young people and it is a privilege to call him a Community Games 'Shining Light'.

He is a glowing example of the Olympic and Paralympic legacy in Birmingham."

Craig, who is now working as an apprentice for the O2 Think Big in London, will join 69 other 'Shining Lights' from across the country on the last day of the Community Games Relay.

They will all come together to receive an official thank you at the opening of the Copper Box (which played host to handball during the Games), at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, on July 27.

Mrs Deane added:

"Last year Community Games helped bring friends, families and communities together in celebration of London 2012, in a unique way, helping to bring a piece of the Olympic and Paralympic Games to everybody.

By celebrating the Community Games Relay and the achievements of volunteers across the country we hope to inspire even more people to come forward and host Community Games events in their communities or enjoy the 1,000 events taking place across the country this year."

Craig Smith said:

"I grew up in and around the local area of Kings Heath/Druids Heath, and have a real passion for the community.

I came onboard with the Friends of Walkers Heath Park in the summer of 2012 when I heard they were hosting a Community Games event as part of the London 2012 Olympics community outreach programme.

My passion lies in the performing arts, and I have trained as a musical theatre student through the 'gifted and talented' programme at my school and college. Since taking part in the Community Games event, I haven't really looked back as it gave me the confidence, through the support of Leanne, to become more and more involved with the group, eventually helping me to take a lead on organising my own events

I have also been able to gain casual employment and also taken part in various different meetings about the parks ongoing development. New opportunities have arisen through developing my voluntary experiences, and I am now vice chair of another Friends group closer to where I live."

Minister for civil society Nick Hurd said:II

"The 2012 Games showed people what is possible when they come together and get involved.

A strong country is built on solid communities, which is why we have awarded Community games support through the Social Action Fund, helping more people improve where they live and discover what a rewarding experience volunteering is."

If you would like to organise a Community Games or to find out when your next event is taking place, log on to www.communitygames.org.uk.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Community Games:

- The Community Games programme was launched in the West Midlands in 2009 and was originally funded for three years by Legacy Trust UK, an independent charity set up to help build a lasting cultural and sporting legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- Last year 1,648 Community Games took place involving more than one million participants and 36,847 volunteers.
- Community Games is inspired by the Wenlock Olympian Games founded by Dr William Penny Brookes in 1850 and still held annually in Much Wenlock, Shropshire. The Wenlock Olympian Games were the inspiration behind the modern Olympic and Paralympic Games when Baron Pierre du Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic movement, visited the games in 1890. The Community Games programme pays homage to a community event that inspired a global event, and now uses that global event to inspire a new raft of community events.

The YMCA:

- Founded 168 years ago, the YMCA in England is made up of 121 member YMCAs working to ensure that young people have opportunities to thrive and contribute positively to their communities.
- YMCA operates in over 530 different communities in England impacting upon the lives of over 500,000 people every year.
- Every night YMCAs provide over 9,000 beds for young people. The YMCA is the largest voluntary sector provider of safe, supported accommodation for single men and women aged between 16-30 years old.
- The YMCA enables nearly 24,000 people every year to engage in education, skills and training to enable them to improve their opportunities in the job market.
- The YMCA is the largest voluntary sector provider of health and wellbeing services promoting physical activity.
- For further information please visit <http://www.ymca.org.uk>

The County Sports Partnership Network (CSPN):

- The County Sports Partnership Network brings together 49 County Sports Partnerships from across England, and is responsible for supporting the delivery of national sports policy at a local level by shaping it to the needs of local communities.
- The CSPN contributes to the health of the nation by helping local people lead healthier, active lives. The CSPN brings together the knowledge and expertise of a range of local delivery partners – including local authorities, clubs and schools – which enables it to use resources in the most efficient way possible to deliver sport in local communities.

Donna Roddy, Citydesk Sport, on behalf of Birmingham Sport and Physical Activity Partnership (BSPAP).

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