

Busting migrant myths – mural created by Wrexham students displayed at Waterworld Leisure Centre

Tuesday 9 July, 2013

Students from Wrexham have created a unique mural that encourages young people to base their opinions about migrants on facts, not myths.

Fixer Grace Hayes, 16, believes that many immigrants in the UK suffer from discrimination and prejudice due to a lack of knowledge about why people seek residence in Britain.

With the help of Fixers, the national movement of young people 'fixing the future', Grace and students from St. Joseph's High School have completed a collage of 42 paintings representing reasons for moving country.

The artwork, which has been turned into a mural, will be displayed in the Waterworld Leisure Centre, Wrexham, from Monday 15 July for one week.

"I think a lot of people, particularly young people, are often taught to think that immigration is a bad thing," says Grace, who also volunteers as a peer educator with the British Red Cross.

"But immigration happens for a variety of reasons. Many people who come to the UK genuinely want to set up a better life for themselves, and some of these people are seeking asylum because of troubles in their own country."

Grace designed two panels for the art piece, including one focusing on escaping conflict.

"I wanted to show that conflict is something that can drive people from their homeland, and that refugees and asylum seekers from countries where there is war need our support," she says.

Grace hopes that the art piece will be a success and will challenge young people to think about the other side of the story, and not the myths that the media often focus on.

"It would be great to just get young people analysing what they hear and see, and get them questioning it. There are two sides to every story."

The mural contains monochrome prints, which represent some of the 'push factors', such as war or natural disaster, which could cause people to leave their home. Meanwhile colourful prints represent 'pull factors' such as better housing conditions or improved access to education, which might attract someone to a new country.

Mathew Woodward, Teaching Assistant at St Joseph's High School agrees that young people need to learn about this important issue.

"I think the project is a great idea. It's a good way for the students to learn about issues in the world and find out why people leave their countries," he says.

Niall Phillips, a student at St Joseph's High School and British Red Cross Peer Educator, created pieces of art for the mural.

"I wanted to contribute my skills as much as I can and wanted to give something back to the community," he says.

"Hopefully it will inspire others to challenge stigma and stereotypes they may come across in the news."

Grace is also working on the Red Cross PIC&MIX; project which trains Year 10 students as peer educators, who in turn aim to raise awareness about migration. The project celebrates Welsh culture and heritage as well as embracing and respecting the language and diversity of foreign students within the schools in Wrexham.

Catriona Learmont, British Red Cross PIC&MIX; Coordinator, supports this important project.

"I am delighted that Fixers, the British Red Cross and St Joseph's can work together to highlight the

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complex issue of migration in a visual and exciting way to the community.

"The Red Cross aims to promote a humanitarian view of migration which recognises the human being behind labels such as 'refugee' and 'economic migrant'.

"We hope to help young people recognise that people who migrate may sometimes be vulnerable, but also have rights and a great deal of potential.

"The passion of the students to overcome the negative attitudes presented in this topic is inspirational."

Fixers is a charity which supports thousands of young people across the UK to take action and change things for the better, addressing any issue they feel strongly about.

How each Fixer tackles an issue is up to them - as long as they benefit someone else.

Fixers was set by the Public Service Broadcasting Trust (PSBT) in 2008 and has already supported 8,400 young people across the UK.

Now, thanks to a grant from the Big Lottery Fund, Fixers aims to work with a further 19,000 young people over the next three years.

"Fixers started in 2008 as just an idea... an idea given a voice by 8,400 young people over the past five years," says Margo Horsley, Chief Executive of PSBT.

"They have reached thousands of people with their work, on a national stage as well as in and around where they live. They choose the full array of social and health issues facing society today and set about making their mark. Fixers are always courageous and their ideas can be challenging and life-changing, not just for themselves."

Peter Ainsworth, Big Lottery Fund UK Chair, said: "The Big Lottery Fund is extremely proud to be supporting Fixers to engage with more young people to change things for the better. Fixers has a tremendous potential – one young person's initial idea can be transformed into reality, spread across a community and make a positive influence on a wide range of people. There are thousands of young people campaigning to make improvements in their neighbourhoods and Fixers provides a platform to highlight their voluntary work and many achievements."

For images, interviews or more information, please contact Sue Meaden in the Fixers Communications Team by email sue@fixers.org.uk or phone 01962 810970.

There are lots more stories about young people doing great things on the Fixers website, Twitter and Facebook pages:

<http://www.fixers.org.uk>

<http://www.twitter.com/FixersUK>

<http://www.facebook.com/FixersUK>

Notes to editors:

- Fixers started in England in 2008. Now with a £7.2 million grant from the Big Lottery Fund, Fixers is extending into Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. To date, over 8,400 young people across the UK have become Fixers and created 1,000 projects.
- The Public Service Broadcasting Trust is a charity that brings together mainstream broadcasters, public and voluntary sector services, and viewers.
- The Big Lottery Fund (BIG), the largest distributor of National Lottery good cause funding, is responsible for giving out 40% of the money raised for good causes by the National Lottery.
- BIG is committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need and has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since June 2004. The Fund was formally established by Parliament on 1 December 2006.
- Since the National Lottery began in 1994, 28p from every pound spent by the public has gone to good causes. As a result, over £29 billion has now been raised and more than 383,000 grants awarded across arts, sport, heritage, charities, health, education and the environment.

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