Carlisle free runners campaign to improve the negative image of urban sport

Tuesday 5 February, 2013

A group of young people from Carlisle who are determined to raise the profile of the urban sport of free running will be featured on ITV News Lookaround on Thursday, February 7, from 6pm.

A group of 16 to 18-year-olds from Carlisle are campaigning to improve the negative image of free running. They are keen to educate people that it is an actual sport which demands significant physical discipline.

Now working as 'Fixers', the group – who train for up to 15 hours a week - hope that by educating their local community, more people will get involved and enjoy the pleasures of free running.

Fixers is a movement of 16 to 25-year-olds across the UK who are supported 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.

Free running is a form of urban gymnastics, which involves performing tricks like front and back flips using street furniture such as walls and rails.

The group of six young men train at their local youth centre, Carlisle Youth Zone, but say they encounter problems when they practice on the streets.

Believing that they are often viewed as a nuisance, who may potentially cause damage to property, the youngsters say they have been stopped or moved on by the police in the past.

"People don't necessarily know that we're free running, they think we're just jumping off things and messing around," said Alex Webster, 18.

"A lot of people think we're being destructive or that we're going to hurt ourselves. I don't think people realise we've put hours in training inside with safety equipment before we go outside and try it."

The group are keen to inspire more people, especially younger children, to get involved with free running. They see it as a positive activity which is a great way to stay fit and active.

"I've become much fitter since I started free running a few years ago, it changes the way you feel, it changes your diet and makes you eat healthier," said Christian Thompson, 18.

With the help of Fixers, the group are now planning to make their own documentary style film which will be shown in Carlisle to get their message across.

In the long-term, the group hope that through raising awareness in their community they will be able to secure funding from their local authority to create a dedicated safe practice space.

Fixers are young people who give their time to make a difference in their communities.

Each Fixer is supported to create the resources they need to make their chosen project a success, with creative help from media professionals to make their own promotional material, such as films, websites or print work.

Fixers is a project of the Public Service Broadcasting Trust (PSBT), funded by the Big Lottery Fund which awarded them £7.2 million in April 2012.

"Fixers started in 2008 as just an idea… an idea given a voice by some 5,500 young people over the past four 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. Their ideas can be challenging, inspirational and often life-changing."

Peter Ainsworth, Big Lottery Fund UK Chair, said: "The Big Lottery Fund is extremely happy to be supporting Fixers to engage with more young people to change things for the better. Thousands of

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public-spirited young people across the UK are campaigning to make improvements in their own communities. By providing a platform to highlight their voluntary work and many achievements, Fixers demonstrates the positive contribution thousands of committed young people are making at a local level and challenges negative stereotypes."

Picture captions:
Fixers Free Running 1- Christian Thompson & Alex Webster (L-R)
Fixers Free Running 2 - Christian Thompson & Alex Webster (L-R)

For images, interviews and more information, please contact Sarah Jones in the Fixers Communications Team by email sarahj@fixers.org.uk or phone 01962 810970.

Notes to editors:

• Fixers is a project of the Public Service Broadcasting Trust, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, and featured on ITV regional news programmes. Since 2008 more than 6,500 young people in England have become Fixers and created some 800 projects. Their achievements have been highlighted in over 300 ITV features. Now with a £7.2 million grant from the Big Lottery Fund, Fixers is extending into Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, and aims to work with 21,000 young people over the next four years.
• 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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