Devon teens on a mission to halt ‘disposable fashion’ trend

Tuesday 4 June, 2013

A pair of Torbay Fixers are urging others to feed their fashion senses by re-cycling clothes rather than chucking them away.

Working with Fixers, the national movement of young people ‘fixing’ the future, A-level students, Brittany Benton and Livvy Dimeck, both 17, held a ‘swishing’ event at their school, St Cuthbert Mayne, to encourage fellow students to swap unwanted clothes rather than throw them away

A report about their campaign will feature on ITV News West Country on Thursday, June 6, from 6pm.

With cheap clothes readily available on the high street, Brittany and Livvy feel people find it too easy to buy and discard clothes in equal measure.

Both girls admit that they themselves have often worn items of clothing before forgetting about them, or even throwing them away.

“I think fashion has become very disposable, especially in the last few years. When I was looking through my wardrobe I realised I had loads of stuff that I have never or barely wore,” said Brittany.

Brittany and Livvy feel that people are indulging in this wasteful habit with little understanding of the impact which ‘disposable fashion’ has on such things as the environment and workers in other parts of the world.

Brittany said: “I know for a fact a lot of teenagers don’t think about the production side of where an item of clothing comes from. They just pick up an item that’s cheap and easy to buy.”

Livvy added: “The cheaper it is the more you can buy. If you buy a top for a fiver and throw it way, that’s an absolute waste. We could be saving a lot of pollution and energy.

“We’re amazed at how many tonnes of clothes are thrown away.”

Ian Hartley, Waste Client Manager at Torbay Council agrees and feels the cycle of cheap clothing being produced, sold then wasted locally, is not understood.

“In Torbay we throw away about 300 tonnes of textiles a year,” he said.

“We collect most of them from the kerbside with probably about 90 per cent of what we take to our processors, taken to Asia, Africa and Eastern bloc countries.”

In order to change attitudes, Brittany and Livvy held a swishing event at their school, designed to get pupils to bring in unwanted clothes with the option of swapping them for other peoples.

“We asked people to bring clothes from their wardrobe that they didn’t want any more. They would get a ticket in return and then they could come to the event and could choose what they want,” Livvy said.

“When we first originally came up with the idea, everyone was a bit ‘I don’t want to do that,’” said Brittany.

“But when they saw the quality of the clothes, people really got in to it and understood it wasn’t tatty clothes people were swapping, but clothes that people didn’t need.”

The pair found the event a success and hope it has left a lasting message with their school friends.

Brittany said: “From this project we really hope we’ve raised awareness about recycling clothes. I definitely think people enjoyed it, said how good an idea it was and how they’d like to do it again.”

Livvy added: “The environmental impact of fashion is a big worry because people don’t really understand that our clothes aren’t necessarily being made in England, but in China or India, so they’ve got to be transported, causing pollution.

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“You can recycle clothes and be socially acceptable. You just don’t have to go out and spend £30 on a top when you can just swap it.”

Fixers is a charity which supports 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.

The award-winning Fixers project has already supported more than 7,800 young people across the UK to have an authentic voice in their community.

Now, thanks to funding from the Big Lottery Fund, Fixers aims to work with a further 20,000 young people over the next three years.

Fixers is a project of the Public Service Broadcasting Trust (PSBT), a charity that brings together mainstream broadcasters, public and voluntary sector services, and viewers.

“Fixers started in 2008 as just an idea… an idea given a voice by some 7,800 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.”

One photo attached. Caption: Livvy Dimeck and Brittany Benton, both from Torbay

For images, interviews or more information, please contact Jatin Patel in the Fixers Communications Team by email jatin@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:
www.fixers.org.uk
www.twitter.com/FixersUK
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, around 7,800 young people across the UK have become Fixers and created more than 900 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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