

Essex cheerleaders rally young women to stick with sport

Thursday 4 April, 2013

A team of Essex cheerleaders are 'fixing' an issue close to their hearts by campaigning to get young women aged 16 to 25 back into sport.

Led by Rachel Blatch, 26, they say many girls drop out of sport entirely when they leave school, often putting their social life first or because they worry about what they will look like.

Working with Fixers, the national movement of young people fixing the future, the cheerleaders are using their passion for sport to inspire other young women to get involved – before it's too late.

They believe young women who miss out on the long-term health benefits of sport may live to regret it.

"Obesity is a growing problem in the UK, but I don't think most women take it very seriously until it's too late – so it's best if you can stop it before it happens" said Rachel, who lives in Southend-on-Sea.

"It's much harder to lose weight than it is to maintain a healthy weight."

Rachel, who set up Essex Stars cheerleading squad in 2009, added: "We've got ladies of all different ages, sizes, shapes, religions. It doesn't matter who you are or what you do, there's no excuse not to get involved in sport."

A report about their Fixers campaign will feature on ITV News Anglia on Tuesday, April 9, from 6pm. In all sports, almost half as many 16 – 24 year-old women take part in sport as men of the same age, according to the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation.

Working with Fixers, the cheerleaders are hoping to create a poster campaign to target schools and higher education institutions to promote sport to young women.

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.

The award-winning Fixers project has already supported over 7,000 young people across the UK to have an authentic voice in their community.

Now, thanks to a £7.2 million grant 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 7,000 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."

Two photos attached. Captions:

1. Fixer Rachel Blatch
2. The Essex Stars in action

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

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

www.fixers.org.uk

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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 7,000 young people across the UK have become Fixers and created 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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