Homeless charity makes great strides in London

Friday 11 April, 2014

SPAT (Social Purpose And Time), an innovative new London charity that uses running to help homeless and under-privileged young people, has been given a huge boost, having been awarded business support and a grant of nearly £10,000 from the UK's largest Sport for Development charity, Sported, to develop and expand the project across the Capital.

SPAT is the UK's first charity to provide running, fitness and nutritional-based initiatives to homeless and disadvantaged young people aged 16-24, using the power of sport as a catalyst for proactive and productive social change.

The charity was founded in 2012 by [South London] resident and keen runner, James Gilley (25) with the help of old college friends James Butler (25), following the death of a close friend to a heroin overdose. Shocked by the lack of support available for young people who are struggling in society, the pair wanted to give something back and do something positive. In doing so, SPAT was born at New Horizon Youth Centre in Kings Cross with the help of Alex Eagle (31). The charity now uses running to empower vulnerable young people, dispel the negativity that hinders their development, and support them in making the successful transition into employment, education and accommodation.

SPAT delivers its programme in partnership with established homeless charities and hostels in three separate London boroughs: Camden, Tower Hamlets and Southwark. In addition to providing regular training running sessions, nutritional supplements, dietary advice, new clothing and equipment, SPAT also helps its members access relevant vocation and housing opportunities. A peer-mentorship scheme allows graduated members to return to take part in sessions and oversee the coaching and support of new members.

Sported, the Sport for Development charity founded by former Deputy Chairman of LOCOG, Sir Keith Mills, has been working closely with SPAT on its development since 2013. As a charity Sported provides business support and funding to grassroots community groups, such as SPAT, that use sport to transform the lives of disadvantaged young people. One important way it does this is through matching its members with skilled business mentors to help their organisation grow, develop and become sustainable. Sported business mentors Jessica Anstee and Anas Hassan have been working closely with Gilley and Butler for the last six months on developing SPAT's marketing and corporate fundraising strategy and formalising the charity's governance, organisational structure and business plan.

James Gilley, founder of SPAT, said: "The journey over the past two years has been a real roller-coaster. From day one we set out to establish a programme where the needs of vulnerable young people are at the forefront of the programme's development. But this was very difficult when my colleague, James Butler, and I worked out of our kitchen and had no prior experience in this field! "

He adds: "SPAT became Sported members within six months of starting out. This allowed us to excel in the areas that we had no experience and ultimately sped up the process in securing the foundations we needed to go on and help more young people. We feel very lucky to have had Jess and Anas as Sported mentors, they totally understood our vision and will forever be part of our ever-growing family."

According to an evaluation by Sported's impact assessment tool Sportworks, it is estimated that over a one-year period (Sept 2012 – Oct 2013) SPAT saved society £4,427,008 as a result of reducing negative-outcome behaviour, which otherwise would have occurred were it not for participating in the programme. Due to the on-going success of the project, the growing demand for SPAT's services and the achievements of Gilley and Butler in working with mentors Jessica and Anas , Sported has awarded SPAT a grant of £9,982 to aid in the expansion of its services across London.

Gilley concludes: "What started with a promise I made at my friend's funeral, has led me to seeing over 70 vulnerable young people blossom into really strong and enthusiastic individuals. I feel immensely proud to be a part of SPAT and our achievements to date, but this is just the beginning. With support from the likes of Sported and the London Marathon, we've ambitious plans to grow the charity nationally and work with even more incredible young people."

Hamid Vaghefian, London Regional Manager at Sported, said: "SPAT has adopted a really innovative approach to engaging a group of young people that is notoriously difficult to reach. The charity, although in its infancy, is already making a huge difference. What James Gilley and James Butler have achieved in such a short amount of time is testament to all their hard work, ambition and determination. It's fantastic

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that Sported been able to support SPAT through the early stages of its growth and we hope that with further funding they can change the lives of even more young people through sport."

Sported is not the only organisation to get behind SPAT's work. In March 2014 it was announced that the London Marathon will also be providing financial backing for the next two years to help it expand its services to help more homeless young people.

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Picture 1 shows SPAT's Patron, Colin Jackson CBE (left), and Tony Young, a volunteer who came through the SPAT programme.

For more information about Sported or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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Notes to Editors

About Sported
Sported is the UK's largest Sport for Development charity.

Sported is a free membership organisation that supports thousands of inspirational groups and projects in the UK which deliver 'Sport for Development'. These groups use sport to help disadvantaged young people fulfil their potential in life, by improving their education, health and well-being, and reducing their risk of becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

Sported works with its members to build their capacity and become more sustainable, so that they can help more young people for longer. It does this through the provision of skilled business mentors; targeted information and funding resources; training and development; and access to networking and cost saving opportunities.

Sported recognises that every community is unique and the issues and problems affecting each one are different. That's why it has established a UK-wide network of regional and country managers, and local business mentors who understand the specific needs of its local communities and members.

In addition to helping individual organisations, Sported is committed to demonstrating the social benefits of Sport for Development and increasing investment into the sector.

Sported has been awarded the Inspire Mark by LOCOG

www.sported.org.uk - Registered charity number: 1123313

About SPAT
SPAT is a unique new charity that provides running & fitness-based initiatives to homeless and underprivileged young people aged 16-24, using the great value of sport as the catalyst to positively transform lives. By embracing the camaraderie and subsequent motivational benefits of regular exercise, it empowers young people and supports more in successfully making the transition into employment, education and accommodation.

Long-term, goal-orientated behaviour enables participants to counteract addictions, cancel out harmful repeated patterns and replace social circles – ultimately, dispelling the negativity that hinders their personal development and creating solid foundations from which to take control of their lives.

Full details about SPAT and its programme are available on the website: www.spat.org.uk

About New Horizon Youth Centre
New Horizon Youth Centre is a day centre based in King's Cross, London. Its aim is to enable vulnerable and disadvantaged young people to gain skills and knowledge to improve their life chances and to help them move from adolescence into adulthood: www.nhyouthcentre.org.uk

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