

Pledging to stay road safe.

Friday 9 August, 2013

A team of Fixers in Magherafelt is urging young people to wise-up to road safety as road accidents take the life of a young person every 22 days in Northern Ireland.

Fixer Joanne Evans, 20, from Aghnacloy, lost her cousin to a car accident at the age of 15, just before Christmas in 2012. Together with friend Michael Bradley, she is leading a team, urging young people to be safer on the road.

Working with Fixers, a charity which supports 16 to 25 year olds to 'fix' the future, the team have created a pledge and will be urging young people to sign it at the Cool FM Road Safe Road Show in Magherafelt this Autumn.

The Fixers campaign will be the subject of a broadcast on UTV News Live on Thursday, August 8 from 6pm.

Joanne was incredibly close to her cousin, while Michael was her best friend. They were shocked when they heard the news of her tragic death.

Joanne said: "Me and my cousin were very close, she was more like my little sister because I'm an only child."

"When I first found out it was devastating, it really hit home. Losing her made me more aware of road safety in general, especially with young people on the roads."

Michael said: "We were best friends from a young age, around eight. We were like brother and sister.

"It's just so hard, it's like an emptiness. It's hard to explain in words, really, knowing that you'll never see her again."

The pair met through a youth club in Magherafelt. After their loss, the youth club members became more aware of road safety issues and more determined to raise greater understanding of it amongst young people.

Working as a team, they came up with the idea of creating a pledge, to act as a young person's code of conduct on the road.

Joanne said: "I got together with my cousin's friends from Magherafelt and Fixers are helping us on creating a pledge for road safety. It will be like a code of conduct for the road for young drivers to stick to."

The team met with Chief Inspector Sam Donaldson, Magherafelt Area Commander for the PSNI. He supports the project and feels the voice of young people will be more effective in getting such an important message across.

He said: "The message to get across to young people is much better coming from young people."

"If these Fixers are taking messages out which say 'slow down on the roads', 'be careful as a driver, be careful as a passenger,' it becomes a much stronger message for fellow young people."

The Fixers hope that their pledge is signed by as many young people as possible, but more importantly, leaves an important message with them that road safety should be taken seriously and can save lives. Michael said: "I want young people to become more aware that driving can be dangerous. A simple accident can affect not just your life but everyone's life around you, including friends and family."

Joanne said: "I hope that people who sign the pledge will maybe be more aware of things that will affect their lives if they don't take precautions on the road.

"If at least one person comes away with a better mind-set and it saves them the heartache that my family and friends have had to go through it would be brilliant."

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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 around 8,700 young people across the UK to have an authentic voice in their community.

Now, thanks to funding from the Big Lottery, 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 some 8,700 young people over the past five years,” says Margo Horsley, Chief Executive of Fixers.

“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.”

Frank Hewitt, Big Lottery Fund's NI 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 pictures attached. Captions:

Image 1: Joanne Evans, 20, from Aughnacloy

Image 2: Joanne Evans and Michael Bradley

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 8,700 young people across the UK have become Fixers and created more than 1,040 projects.
- 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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