Reality TV star and model backs young Stockport stroke victim's awareness campaign

Tuesday 5 February, 2013

A young stroke victim from Stockport whose awareness campaign has won the support of reality TV star and model Chloe Cummings will be featured on ITV Granada Reports on Thursday, February 7, from 6pm.

Becky Beaumont from Stockport was just 21 when she suffered a stroke. After a night out at a pub quiz with friends, Becky went home to bed, but when she woke the next morning she was horrified to discover that she couldn't move the left side of her body.

Just over a year later, Becky is now working as a 'Fixer', and wants to put on an event to raise awareness that stroke is not an older person's disease and can happen at any age.

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.

As part of her campaign, Fixers arranged for Becky, now 22, to meet Britain's Next Top Model's Chloe Cummings, who is a trained nurse and used to work with stroke victims.

"It's really of interest to me, and I think it's good to raise awareness for a younger audience, as everyone always presumes its only older people that have strokes," said Chloe, a cousin of model Abbey Crouch. "The more people we can get on board with this, the better."

After her stroke in October 2011, Becky started a blog about her experiences, which has been read by hundreds of thousands of people, and gained celebrity fans including Ricky Gervais and David Hasselhoff.

On the morning that Becky woke up paralysed, her mum heard her scream and ran into her bedroom. She saw that Becky's face was drooping on one side and called an ambulance.

Following tests at the hospital, doctors confirmed the shocking news that Becky had suffered a stroke.

Initially unable to walk, Becky can now manage it for around 20 minutes at a time. However, she suffers from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and still has restricted movement in her left arm and hand.

"I went from being completely independent - working, training to be a hairdresser - to being like a toddler again," she said. "I was dependent on everybody to do everything for me.

"At 21-years-old you feel like you're invincible, and then to be told you've suffered a stroke, it's just the biggest shock in the world. "

She added: "This has changed my life. When people ask me why I walk with a bit of a limp they're shocked when I tell them I've had a stroke because they don't expect you can have one so young.

"I want to use my story as a way of showing it can happen to young people and raise awareness to save lives."

With the support of Fixers, Becky – who suffered a second, more minor stroke in August 2012 - wants to harness her new celebrity contacts and hold an event to raise awareness about strokes in young people.

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.

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“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 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.”

Two photos attached. Picture captions:
• Young Strokes 1 - Fixer Becky Beaumont.
• Young Strokes 2 - Chloe Cummings & Becky Beaumont (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.

For more information on strokes, visit www.nhs.uk/actfast or www.stroke.org.uk

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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