Strictly hero visits inclusive dance charity

Tuesday 28 June, 2022

Members of local charity DanceSyndrome were thrilled when they got a surprise visit from Strictly Come Dancing 2021 champion and dance hero Giovanni Pernice.

The team were attending a special rehearsal in Plungington Community Centre, Preston, which was being filmed for the Channel 4 TV lifestyle show Steph's Packed Lunch. They had just returned to the session after lunch when they got a big surprise when Giovanni walked into their session!

DanceSyndrome is a multi-award-winning dance charity that was founded by Jen Blackwell, who happens to have Down's syndrome. The charity was formed because Jen found it difficult to find opportunities in community dance that were accessible to people with learning disabilities. DanceSyndrome's ethos is that disability should never be a barrier to following your dreams. All DanceSyndrome sessions are disability led, with people with learning disabilities taking visible Dance Leader roles to inspire people to see what can be achieved when we all become more inclusive.

DanceSyndrome was recently awarded funding from The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK. The charity received almost £180,000 to continue its inspirational work to use dance as a medium to empower and make positive changes for people living with learning difficulties.

On arriving at the community centre, Giovanni watched enthusiastically while the DanceSyndrome Team demonstrated the way an inclusive dance session works, then joined in with some dance activities. DanceSyndrome Artistic Director Sophie Tickle asked Giovanni for a stimulus for some creative dance work so he demonstrated some moves, before the team broke off into small groups and devised performance pieces based on Giovanni's movements. They then shared their performances with friends and family at the end of the session. Dance Leaders John Burrow and Jodie Turner also got the chance to be interviewed by Giovanni on camera.

Speaking after the session, DanceSyndrome Artistic Director Sophie Tickle said "We're so grateful to the Steph's Packed Lunch team for coming to meet us to find out what DanceSyndrome is all about. We want to say a huge "thank you" to Giovanni for taking time out of his busy schedule to surprise our dancers and for joining in with us and learning more about inclusive dance with so much passion. We all left the dance space feeling energised and inspired and everyone is really excited about being on TV!"

The footage from the day was compiled for a segment on Steph's Packed Lunch on Channel 4, which show was aired on Monday 27th June at 12:30pm. If you missed it, you can catch up on All 4.

You can find out more about the work that DanceSyndrome does at www.dancesyndrome.co.uk

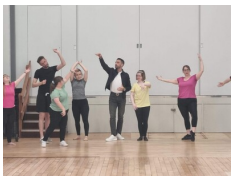
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