

Student sets up choir to celebrate the musical talents of Mildenhall

Monday 8 July, 2013

A student from Mildenhall is setting up her own choir to show how music can be a form of therapy for people with disabilities.

Fixer Courtney Reeve, 16, finds being creative really helps her in everyday life. "I have cerebral palsy, which means that my speech is slurred and my movement uncoordinated," she says.

"Ever since I was a little girl I realised that I was not the same as my friends. But I have never let my disability hold me back.

Courtney is extremely active; she dances, enjoys art, plays wheelchair basketball and loves singing. She believes singing helps with speech, coordination and confidence and wants to show that with or without a disability, you can still enjoy life.

With support from Fixers, the national movement of young people 'fixing the future', Courtney is setting up her own choir and creating posters to advertise the practice sessions.

"Because I speak the way that I do sometimes people think that I have a mental problem, which is not true," Courtney adds. "I have just finished my GCSEs.

"I have been called retarded, retard, all negative names. Sometimes people are not able to see past my disability and see me as a regular teenager.

"Anyone with any type of disability can join my choir. I hope everyone who lives in the local area with disabilities would like to join, make music, make friends and have lots of fun."

Jane Sayer, a music teacher at Mildenhall College, has already been recruited to act as the choir master for Courtney's Fix.

"The project is a fantastic idea," she says. "Courtney absolutely loved music when she was at school. She threw herself into every musical activity she possibly could and the main one was the choir.

"She used to call it her happy place; somewhere where her disability disappeared and she fitted in with everybody and she felt totally happy."

Fixers is charity which supports 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 their chosen issue is up to them – as long as they benefit someone else.

The award-winning Fixers project has already supported over 8,400 young people to have an authentic voice in their community.

Each Fixer is supported to create the resources they need - such as films, websites or print work - to make their chosen project a success.

Now, thanks to a 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 trademark of the Public Service Broadcasting Trust (PSBT).

"Fixers started in 2008 as just an idea... an idea given a voice by over 8,400 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."

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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."

Photo attached. Captions:

1. Courtney loves to sing.

For images, interviews or more information, please contact Sue Meaden in the Fixers Communications Team by email sue@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:

<http://www.fixers.org.uk>

<http://www.twitter.com/FixersUK>

<http://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, over 8,400 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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