Tile Cross Academy Wins Social Mobility Award

Monday 12 October, 2020

Tile Cross Academy has won the school/college category of the prestigious Social Mobility Awards 2020. The award was announced on Thursday 8th October 2020 during a special online awards ceremony.

On making the award to Tile Cross Academy, the organisers commented that the Academy was: “Committed to providing equal access to education and opportunities to all.” This chimes perfectly with the ambition of The Ulysses Trust which has provided financial support to students from the Academy to take part in life-changing expedition experiences. Examples of which were included in the Academy’s submission to demonstrate the extraordinary opportunities available to young people who attend the secondary school.

Tile Cross Academy serves one of the most disadvantaged communities in Birmingham. On top of this many of the pupils are recently arrived migrants with significant additional barriers to social mobility. On winning the award Neil Mackintosh, Head of Social Mobility at Tile Cross Academy, said: **“**We were delighted to be named as winners of the School/College of the Year in the UK Social Mobility Awards 2020. The opportunities provided by our Sea Cadet unit were a major part of our submission, many of which have been generously funded by The Ulysses Trust. The skills and personal qualities developed by these experiences are acknowledged to be drivers of social mobility and without the support of the Trust they would have been beyond the financial reach of our pupils/cadets.”

With support from The Ulysses Trust, cadets from Tile Cross Academy’s Sea Cadet unit, TS Stirling Sea Cadets and other participating units have taken part in a total of seven expeditions enabling 105 cadets to benefit from extraordinary outdoor activities in the UK, USA and Italy. The Trust helps cadets across the UK to take part in unique adventures by providing financial assistance to reduce the cost of the exercises to cadets and their families and make these fantastic experiences affordable to all. The Trust is particularly keen to support disadvantaged young people, and almost half the cadets taking part in expeditions through Tile Cross Academy and TS Stirling were in receipt of Free School Meals. A total amount of £20,806 has been awarded by The Ulysses Trust over three years to these young ‘Brummies’. And in 2017 an exercise delivered by TS Stirling and supported by The Ulysses Trust was recognised for its outstanding achievement by winning a Prince of Wales’s Expeditionary Award.

The most recent example of these expeditions is Ex: Yankee Stirling Venturer 2019 when the unit deployed to Massachusetts, Boston to undertake a mixture of adventurous training, leadership development tasks, military skills training and military history. Initially, the cadets took part in ceremonial events and visits to the local coast guard and maritime police facilities. This was followed by the main event, a Junior Cadet Leadership Challenge at Fort Devens US Army Reserve Training Centre.

Although not physically arduous or challenging from a strictly adventurous training point view this camp was a significant test for the cadets. A ‘standard’ unit adventurous training expedition will involve cadets undertaking challenges with their friends and peers so there is a feeling of togetherness and familiarity with the people if not the activity. These cadets arrived at the camp and were immediately separated from all their friends and the sense of disorientation generated a lot of self-confidence issues and home sickness. Simply being put in a room with eight ‘foreigners’ you don’t know is daunting for any 14-year-old away from home for the first time. However, by the end of the week they had made new friends and undertaken a significant amount of the personal development in a short space of time.

For all of the cadets, whatever their nationality, the camp was a challenge. All the participants were from areas of deprivation and were well outside their comfort zone on the activities and the camp environment. The heat, long days, and strange food presented significant challenges to the teenagers.

This exercise was a life changing opportunity for all the UK cadets. Some had never flown before and the personal development journey that they went on will help them to have more successful lives as adults.

“The best week of my life so far.’” - Cadet First Class Ellie Morris

“An eye opener and a life-changing experience.” - Cadet First Class Ellejah Paul

The exercise was a resounding success and inspired TS Stirling to continue to push adventurous activities as a powerful tool to transform the lives of its cadets, which has been recognised by winning a SOMOS Award.

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Watch a short video of the expedition at: https://youtu.be/qWJCZFEoxeg

The Ulysses Trust welcomes applications from Cadet, Reservist and University Officer units seeking financial assistance for their own expeditions. The Trust also welcomes donations to help support others to benefit from these life-changing experiences. Find out more or make a donation via www.ulyssestrust.co.uk

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