TV star Gaynor Faye backs young Leeds man to stand up to bullies

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A young man from Leeds who has won the support of TV actress Gaynor Faye as he confronts bullies head-on will be featured on ITV News Calendar on Thursday, February 7, from 6pm.

After suffering years of abuse, Curtis Boylan, from Seacroft, Leeds, has decided to make a stand against bullies.

Now working as a 'Fixer', the 18-year-old is making a powerful short film to talk directly to bullies and help them to understand the distress they cause.

His campaign has won the backing of Emmerdale star Gaynor Faye, who took a break from filming to advise Curtis: "With bullies you either sink or swim."

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 his anti-bullying campaign, Fixers arranged for Curtis to meet TV actress Gaynor Faye, who has spoken publicly about being bullied herself at school.

The actress from Leeds is currently starring in ITV's Emmerdale, and has also appeared in TV shows including Coronation Street and Fat Friends.

Describing her first day at high school, Gaynor said: "There was a group of girls all lined up at the school gates. They were basically deciding who they were going to bully as we walked in and they literally caused my life a misery for three years through school."

She added: "When it comes to bullying, you can either sink or swim. You can either be the victim or you can be the bullied and overcome it, while at the same time becoming stronger."

Hit by a car at the age of three, Curtis suffered a brain injury which left him with epilepsy. He also lost the use of his left hand and sustained permanent damage to his leg which means he walks with a limp.

Throughout his time at high school Curtis says his injuries made him a target for bullies and he was stripped of his confidence as a result of severe verbal and physical bullying by some of his classmates.

"I got bullied, spat at, punched in face. I got called names. I used to lie in bed and cry my eyes out," he said.

Curtis hopes his Fixers film will discourage people from bullying others in the future. He also wants it to highlight the warning signs that family and friends should look out for if they suspect someone they know is being bullied.

"I want to stop people going through the stuff that I did," said Curtis. "I want the bullies to see what they can do to somebody, I don't think they realise what damage they cause, because they don't see it. They just enjoy hurting people and they don't care."

Today Curtis is a performing arts student who wants to become an actor.

Keen to encourage Curtis to follow his dream, TV star Gaynor said being bullied motivated her to become an actress after deciding not to let her tormentors rule her life.

"I wanted to prove to the bullies that I was going to carry on and I was going to do what I wanted to do," she said. "So in lots of ways – I'm a big campaigner against bullying – but my bullies made me who I am."

Fixers are young people who give their time to make a difference in their communities.

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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.

“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:
1. Gaynor Faye with Fixer Curtis Boylan
2. Fixer Curtis Boylan

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.

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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