YMCA orchard project shortlisted for national award

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YMCA Humber is asking local people to give its project their backing ahead of a prestigious national youth awards ceremony hosted this autumn by business woman, Sky presenter and BBC's The Apprentice winner, Michelle Dewberry.

The local youth charity, which has operated in Grimsby for the past 135 years has seen its Orchard Project programme shortlisted as YMCA Health & Wellbeing Project of the Year in Youth Matters Awards 2017.

Youth Matters is YMCA's national awards programme that has been an integral part of the charity's calendar since 2009.

YMCA Humber is up against four other schemes within its award category. Other award categories include YMCA of the Year, Young Achiever of the Year, Young Leader of the Year, Young Volunteer of the Year, Young Worker of the Year and Young Campaigner of the Year.

They have been entered for the award because of its development of young people's skills by working with the environment.

Voting starts online at midnight on Monday 14 August and runs until midnight on Friday 25 August. Votes cast by the public will be combined with judges' choices and the three finalists will be announced on 29 August. All the finalists will attend the ceremony at the exclusive venue 8 Northumberland Avenue, in central London, where the winner will be announced.

Chris McAleese, Head of Development of YMCA Humber, said: "We are overjoyed and excited to be nominated for such a significant award and to have reached this stage of the process.

"We hope everyone in the local community will vote for us as making it through to the final judging panel would be incredible."

Sharon Marray is YMCA Humber's Finance Manager, also leading on the Orchard Project and she said:

"Run and led by residents living in YMCA Humber's Peaks Lane and Foyer accommodation, the Orchard project grew beyond everyone's expectation and now includes 150 fruit and soft fruit trees.

"The trees where not the only ones who blossomed through the project. Residents involved have gained skills in horticulture, project management, budgeting and financial planning and have taken part in public speaking and media interviews, resulting in improved confidence across the group.

"Going above and beyond what's expected, the project group also brought in additional funding from Postcode Local Trust to build a cob house and the O2 Think Big programme to develop an environmentally friendly irrigation system, which harnesses rain water and uses digital, solar powered technology.

"Through their new found awareness of the environment, over 100 shrubs have been planted to create a wildlife haven to encourage bees in the local area.

"Bringing together 64 residents who contributed 1106 volunteer hours in total, the Orchard project is a perfect example of how small seeds can grow big trees."

Youth Matters celebrates the outstanding skills and achievements of young people from across the country. It also recognises the vital work that YMCAs deliver every day to help transform the lives of young people and give them a brighter future.

The YMCA Health & Wellbeing Project of the Year Award recognises different YMCAs that have delivered innovative and inspiring projects that has had a tangible and positive impact on young people and/or the wider community.

Vote in Youth Matters at www.ymca.org.uk/awards. Follow YMCA Humber on Twitter and join the conversation using #YMA17.

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