

Community

Youngsters help hack out a football pitch in Uganda

HARD-WORKING youngsters from Beeston and Chilwell who toiled under hot African sun to lay out a football pitch have been nominated as Nottinghamshire Young People of the Year for a 'YOPEY' award – an annual contest that recognises and rewards young unsung heroes.

The team of 15 carried out a variety of tasks on their three week trip to Uganda and pulled together after tragedy struck their leader. Now they have a chance of winning a top cash prize of £1,000 out of a prize pot put up for young people who are 'positive role models' and 'give to others'.

Youth worker Ian Hayes nominated the group of 15–22 year-olds who go to the Beeston Young People's Centre in West End. Their trip followed a previous exchange set up three years ago with the Kampala Kids League, Uganda.

Planning for last August's trip, which cost £25,000, started in December 2008. Each person had to raise £475 as well as contribute to a general fund. They did this

through car washes, packing bags at a supermarket, a curry night and seeking grants. They also spent some time preparing by learning about citizenship and their host country.

During their first week in the capital, Kampala, they met a group of Ugandan volunteers and attended workshops to learn about each other's ways and cultures. The Broxtowe group also went to a slum area and played football with local youngsters – winning a penalty shoot-out. They also coached local youngsters, some with disabilities.

However, plans for the second week were disrupted when team leader Keith Hanbury collapsed and was evacuated back to Britain with a serious illness.

The decision was taken to continue with youth worker Ian and colleague Jan Key in charge of the group.

They went to a village called Kasese at the foot of the Resori mountains where they spent a week with their Ugandan colleagues turning

a rough piece of land into a football pitch by removing boulders, putting in drainage and digging the ground over.

Ian Hayes said: "The youngsters worked incredibly hard on the pitch in gruelling heat and humidity. They worked with traditional tools such as machetes, hoes and spades as well as their hands, and had to break regularly for water and to conserve energy.

"The group had to earn the trust of local villagers who had not seen white people before.

"In return, the Beeston youngsters learned what it was like to be a minority amongst others, which was an education for them."

Village elders were grateful for the backbreaking work that the young people did, and a plaque was put on a tree to say what they had done.



Ian said that after Keith's illness and departure, the group rallied to carry on with their objective, even though they were disappointed that some elements of the trip could not now take place.

They did manage to get a look at some tourist sites, including the source of the Nile, and were given a civic reception.

"This was a life-changing experience which raised aspirations and saw the group grow in maturity and confidence," said Ian.

The life-changing theme was echoed by 19-year-old Kerry Pink, of Chilwell, who said she went because she wanted a new experience.

"It was amazing to see a totally different way of life," she said. "We went on safari and saw elephants, deer, hippos, warthogs, monkeys, and crocodiles. And it was a shock to see young children begging in Kampala."

Kerry said that taking part in the football match was a laugh but working on laying

the pitch was hard. "It was tiring, hot and painful on the joints and back, but well and truly satisfying at the end.

"Many of the village locals were initially strange because they had not seen white people before but by the end of the week they were very friendly.

"They were the happiest people I had ever seen, even though they had not got much," she said.

Now, because of the experience, Kerry has started youth work training and wants to pursue a career teaching youngsters with disabilities.

Kerry joined Broxtowe's Youth Council last autumn, being elected 'youth mayor' the same day. She chairs the youth council and attends some civic events to represent young people.

Long service award made after St George's Day Parade

SCOUTS and Guides from across the district paraded through Beeston on Sunday, April 18, a few days ahead of St George's Day.

UK citizens are generally aware that St George is the patron saint of England, but not everyone remembers that his official saint's day is April 23. To mark the day each year, the local Scout and Guide groups parade on separate weekends either side of the official date. This year, in recognition of the Girlguiding Centenary in 2010, they were allowed to parade on the same day.

That meant too many young people to all fit into one church for the traditional St George's Day service, so the Scouts headed for Chilwell Road Methodist Church as the Girl Guides turned into the Parish Church of St John the Baptist.

Presentations were made at the end of the Scout service. The Vic Guy Memorial Trophy was presented to 2nd Toton Scouts, the youngest troop in the area.

Then, in recognition of 30 years service, a Long

Service Award was presented to Fred Robinson of 2nd Beeston Sea Scouts.

Thirty years ago, Fred Robinson started helping the cubs with their badge work one night a week. Then he was asked to join the Group Committee and from there, going into uniform was but a short step.

Fred has thoroughly enjoyed every minute of his time with the Sea Scouts. Son Peter, aged 45, travelled from Hampshire for the special presentation on April 18. He said: "I remember

Dad starting to help with badge work when I was a cub. It wasn't long before he was Group Scout Leader, and now he's Group Chair at 2nd Beeston. He's even old enough now to be on the Appointments Committee!"

Fred's wife, Ethel, was also at the presentation ceremony. She said: "I'm so pleased that Fred's dedication and commitment to Scouting has been recognised. He thoroughly enjoys it, and I'm delighted that his efforts over the past 30 years has been acknowledged."