



Press Release

5 March 2008 (Up-dated version)

Boxing Champ punches a positive message to offenders

Former World Champion boxer, Richie Woodall, presented certificates to a group of Telford offenders last night, who successfully completed a sports project as part of their community orders.

Woodall congratulated them on achieving their goal of completing the scheme. His message to the offenders was about how to achieve goals, whatever they are. He said, "To achieve success, work on the areas you are in control of. It was my dream as a seven year old kid from Woodside to become a World Champion and with determination, dedication, perseverance and above all self belief, I achieved it".

The scheme, aimed at drug using offenders, helped to improve their health through sport and activities and supported their re-integration into the community. In addition, participants qualified for a first aid certificate.

Participants on the scheme were supervised by probation officers and trainers provided by EDU-Fit, an organisation that is experienced in engaging hard to reach and disadvantaged groups through physical exercise and activities.

A special presentation evening was held on Tuesday 4 March at AFC Telford Utd for offenders and their families. Most of the offenders have a history of drug misuse and the scheme has helped them develop a new healthier lifestyle and change their attitudes towards offending.

Nikki Beeston, Telford Probation Officer said, "We are absolutely delighted that these offenders have completed the course. The motivation and dedication demonstrated by them was extraordinary and hopefully showed them what could be achieved in other areas of their life if they put this level of hard work in".

"One of the group went on to take a sport qualification and has now secured full time employment for the first time in his life, this demonstrates a real change in his attitude to work and commitment".

An offender commented on the first day of the scheme, "This is the first day that I have not felt angry. There needs to be more projects like this".

The scheme was run by West Mercia Probation in conjunction with Telford & Wrekin Borough Council's Sports Development Unit. It was funded by the Care Services Implementation Partnership, as part of a joint regional initiative to reduce re-offending and improve health, together with Telford and Wrekin's Safer & Stronger Communities Partnership.

Cllr Denis Allen, Cabinet Member for Community Services, said:

"This scheme has been tremendously successful and has provided these young people with alternatives to offending, resulting in fewer victims affected by crime to ensure that Telford continues to be a safe place for everyone. It also demonstrates that people can turn their own lives around through sport and Telford & Wrekin Council is proud to support this."

It is planned to run two further programmes in Telford this year.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

- **PHOTO** of Richie Woodall with two offenders available on request.

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