Funding for project as learning disabled return to 2012 Olympics

10/06/2011

Sixteen young people from Carousel, based in Brighton, will re-tell the history of learning disabled athletes competing in, and being excluded from the games, in the project ‘Paralympic Memories.’

The Paralympic Games originally became internationally recognised in Rome in 1960. In 1988 athletes with learning disabilities were allowed to compete in the Seoul Olympic games. In the 2000 Sydney Paralympics however, ten members of the Spanish basketball team falsely claimed to have learning disabilities and were ruled to be cheating. Subsequently learning disabled athletes were banned from competing in the Paralympics.

A film and educational resources are to be produced using footage from the International Paralympic Archive held in Germany, and the BBC Archive.

Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for the South East, Stuart McLeod, said: "This is a fantastic and timely announcement that acknowledges the return of learning disabled athletes to the London 2012 Paralympics. The film and educational resources produced will provide a lasting legacy of the eventful history of the games. With expert guidance, these young people have a unique opportunity to not only learn, but document a fascinating history for the wider community."

Matthew Hellett, of the learning disabled team that will be leading the project, added: "We heard the story from our friends at Mencap. It is an important and inspiring topic for creative film-making that deserves to be more widely known."

The final celebration is a public presentation of ‘Paralympic Memories’ and award ceremony at Hove Museum and Art Gallery in May 2012 with dignitaries invited to attend.

Notes to editors

There are four sports targeted for inclusion in London 2012 Paralympics, athletics, swimming, rowing and table tennis.

- At the Sydney games in 2000, the Spanish basketball team won gold in a competition for athletes with intellectual disabilities. Ten of the 12-man squad were later found to have no disabilities. As a result, the International Paralympic Committee suspended the category of "athletes with an intellectual disability." The team were stripped of their medal.
- Carousel has been awarded £9,817 by the Heritage Lottery Fund for the 11 month project.
- Two learning disabled filmmakers on the team have won several accolades for their work including the National Lottery Best Arts Project Award.

Carousel is an award-winning learning disability led arts organisation. Founded in 1982 Carousel works to promote the active involvement of people with a learning disability in the arts, teaching new artistic skills and developing existing talents. Our art provision is recognised nationally and internationally for its high quality and unique approach.

Carousel facilitates artists with a learning disability to nurture, manage and deliver our artistic programmes: The Oska

Bright Film Festival, Live Arts projects, the Shut Up and Listen music initiative and associated training activities.