Katarina and 'the Florrie' flourishing with Lotto funding

13/12/2012

Rising star, 19 year-old heptathlete Katarina, inspired young people at the Florence Institute in Toxteth, affectionately known as 'the Florrie', which was the first boys club in the country. Katarina was joined by Tommy 'Demolition Man' Bache and Billy Williams, old Florrie boys and successful boxers.

From 1889, the Florrie played an important part in community life before falling into decline and shutting for 22 years. Two years ago, there was no roof on the building, but the local community rallied around to secure finance from a number of organisations to get the Florrie open again.

With the help of £4.2million from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Florrie reopened earlier this year boasting a gym, auditorium, café, crèche, social enterprises, library and heritage centre.

Liverpool Harrier Katarina Johnson Thompson is one of 1,200 athletes to receive National Lottery funding, which allows her to train full-time and benefit from world class coaching and medical support.

Katarina, who finished 15th in her in augural Olympics this summer in London, said: "I loved competing at the London 2012 Olympics and Lottery funding is supporting me on my journey to Rio in 2016.

"It isn’t just sport that is supported. National Lottery players raise £30million every week, helping a wide variety of good causes. Lottery funding has got the Florrie back on its feet and created great facilities that everyone can enjoy."

Boxers Tommy 'Demolition Man' Bache, Alan Rudkin and swimmer Richard Swinnerton are among the sporting legends to have passed through the doors of the Florrie.

On meeting Katarina, Bache, said: "It was a pleasure to meet Katarina and pass on a few of my training tips to her! The Florrie is once again taking pride of place in the local community, thanks to Lottery funding. It is also allowing Katarina to fulfil her potential. National Lottery players should be proud of how they are changing lives for the better."

Virginia Tandy, Heritage Lottery Fund Trustee for the North West, said: "We're delighted to have been able to showcase the Florrie, one of the UK's most historic youth clubs, to Katarina during her visit to Liverpool.

“For over a century this building has stood the test of time bringing together heritage, sport and young people in the heart of Toxteth's vibrant community. Its survival is thanks to the hard work and vision of the Florence Institute Trust and its dedicated volunteers as well as Lottery players."

Louise Ellman, Labour / Co-operative MP for Liverpool Riverside, said: "I am delighted that Katarina Johnson Thompson visited the Florrie to highlight the vital contribution that the centre makes to the local community.

"The newly restored landmark is now a thriving hub of activity, providing a home for sports and youth development for local people from Dingle and across Liverpool. I wish it continued success."

Notes to editors

National Lottery players have raised £29billion for Good Causes since the Lottery started in 1994. More than 3,000 National Lottery grants have been awarded in Liverpool, with a total value of £338million.

First opened in 1889, the Florrie allowed local people to feel part of something bigger; it instilled a sense of discipline and pride into young people. Despite surviving two world wars, the Florrie fell into decline when its income dried up and it shut in 1988. The local community persuaded Heritage Lottery Fund, European Regional Development Fund, NWDA, Liverpool City Council, the Tudor Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation and the Architectural Heritage Fund to support their campaign to save the Florrie. Now the Florrie is home to youth and social clubs - 250 young people pass through its doors every week. It also boasts a modern gym, dance academy and a business centre.

Further information

Fast Track: Amelie Hawkins on 07768 293 480, email: Amelie.hawkins@fasttrackagency.com.