

Homeless World Cup helps the players get off the sidelines



Dunedin Canmore scores as football project helps homeless men get lives back on track

When William McLean was selected to represent his nation in the Homeless World Cup he couldn't believe his luck.

The 27 year old from Edinburgh says football has helped him turn his life around and he is now volunteering as an ambassador for young people and training to become a community football coach.

William got into football when he was staying at the Dunedin Canmore Housing Association Hostel in Leith. He took part in free Street Soccer events held at Portobello and Sighthill Power Leagues as part of a project at Dunedin Canmore to help homeless men get into work.

And after helping the Dunedin Canmores Partizan football team in the Street Soccer National League reach the final he was invited to attend the trials for the national team that would be representing Scotland in the Homeless World Cup.

William was selected for the final squad of 8 players out of over 300 applicants. They landed a victory at games in Paris

in August out-performing 47 other teams to bring home the trophy and went onto **pick up the most inspirational performance award at the Scottish Sports Awards on 1 December.**

When Dunedin Canmore started taking homeless men to football sessions the goal was to get more engaged with their employability project. Now the Edinburgh based social landlord is celebrating what it says is a real home win for young men like William who have turned their lives around.

Since returning from Paris William has continued to work with the employability links worker and developed an interest in community coaching. He is now volunteering with Street Soccer Scotland, working towards gaining SFA coaching qualifications and hopes to move onto paid work as a community coach.

James Horsburgh, the goalkeeper in the Homeless World Cup Team, also got involved through the Dunedin Canmore employability project and is now working as a community coach for a football team in South Gyle.

William and James are both former residents at Dunedin Canmore Hostel in Leith who are now living in a permanent home.

The Dunedin Canmore Group was the official sponsors of both the men's and women's teams which competed in the prestigious International tournament. As well as contributing £5000 towards travel and accommodation for Scottish teams Dunedin Canmore sponsored William as an individual player.

William said, "The work that Dunedin Canmore has done for me is great. Instead of pushing me into a job they took the time to find my interests and helped me find something constructive to do with my time.

"A lot of people say that we're just playing football but the skills we gain from taking part in the sessions, working as part of a team, communication, trust, health and safety, compassion it all makes a difference."

Gavin Edmonds, Community and Business Initiatives Officer said, "Football is about team work. It's great for improving fitness and health including mental health. The project has definitely put the young people in a more positive place. The skills they learn can help them move out of poverty and into a better life. It can really help them look to their future."

Ewan Fraser, CEO Dunedin Canmore, said, "We are proud to be associated with the Homeless World Cup and congratulate the team and players on winning this fantastic award. Dunedin Canmore is committed to helping others through a number of initiatives and the Employability Pathways Programme is a great example of how we can make a difference by giving people the skills and confidence to help them to move on in their lives."