

# Local charity 'Leith Links' has now raised over £32,000



Local charity Leith Links, which was set up in June 2013 to raise funds for the Hibs Kicks for Kids initiative, is approaching its third anniversary and so far they have raised over £32,000 which has gone to providing the opportunity for children to experience the thrill of attending games at Easter Road.

From an initial 22 KfK season tickets purchased in season 2013/14, the charity quickly progressed to 146 in 14/15 and finally to the remarkable total of 152 in 15/16

Many of the tickets obtained are allocated to the Multi Cultural Family Base (MCFB) and earlier this year several youngsters attended the League Cup final at Hampden Park. (See picture)

The MCFB has been running for 4 years now and has main aims. The first is to help the children and young people gain a sense of belonging and integrate into their local communities and become contributors to Scottish Society. The second aim is to develop links with local grassroots football teams so that the children and young people can be supported to move on when they are ready.

They also benefit from a befriending scheme including donations and kit from generous Hibs' fans and this has resulted in around 15 Black Minority Ethnic (BME) children from the MCFB's football project having moved on to clubs in South East Scotland, such as Redpath Albion, Edina Hibs, Leith Vic., Craigroyston, Blackhall and Newcraighall Vics and one youngster has shown so much promise that he could progress to Spartans.

Leith Links Treasurer Susan Linn told the Edinburgh Reporter: "Next season's fundraising campaign is now well underway, with over £6,000 already raised and there's another auction planned...which will include a 'money can't buy' football experience but more details about that will be announced soon.

"Four years ago, there were only five BME children playing football in the South East so definite progress is being made in this area

"If there's anyone out there who enjoys watching this level of football and would like to pop along to show their support, please let me know."

Lorraine Grady from The MCFB explained: "Our relationship with Leith Links goes back 2 years when Susan first offered me tickets to the Hibs home games. All the children who attend my project want to play for clubs and getting tickets for the matches has been fantastic as it has given the children and young people a 'sense of belonging'. This is achieved by the Hibs supporters saying things like 'Hi boys enjoy the match' or 'that was a great goal son did you see it' the sense of belonging and being part of what I hear being referred to as the Hibs family goes a long way to achieving the aim of belonging and integration. Attending the cup final was a fantastic day for them and again some of the supporters took the time to tell them to enjoy the game or ask if they were excited.

"The children and young people who are playing for the grassroots clubs do so because of the generosity of the Hibernian Supporters Association who provided the money to buy the kit and pay the fees. I will run out of money at the end of this season to continue paying fees and Susan is hoping that the association will provide money for at least a couple of them to keep playing. I hope this will eventually result in better representation of BME communities in professional football.

“Finding money to fund this project is a never ending struggle and I have had to shut down 2 sessions, however, I still have 30 children attending the football sessions weekly and a waiting list.

“I’d like to say a big ‘Thank you Leith Links’ it is the smallest things we do in life that make the biggest difference.”

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