

Ageing Well Midlothian win award for their walking group

A Midlothian group has won an award for their expanding programme which is improving the health of many in its local community.

Ageing Well Midlothian has won the Health Walk Group of the Year at the 2020 [Paths for All](#) Volunteer Awards.

The group organises 15 walks each week and hosts an annual walk each year attracting people in the hundreds. Having just celebrated its 20th year Ageing Well Midlothian continues to grow from strength to strength.

Project Coordinator, Vivian Wallace, said: “The volunteers have developed great friendships with community members, and this award is a great recognition for the fantastic work they have done over the years in the local community.

“On behalf of the volunteers, I’d like to share how delighted we are to have received this award which highlights all of the volunteers’ hard work.”

Ageing Well Midlothian tailors its events each week to the needs and wants of participants, and the group continued to play an integral role throughout lockdown.

55-year-old, Vivian added: “Ageing Well Midlothian started over 20 years ago with one walking group in Dalkeith. One of the first volunteers, former health worker Ruth Simpson, recognised very early on the importance that walking has both physically and mentally and has continued to lead walks to

this present day.

“The project has grown to include 36 walk leaders and 12 other volunteers who cater for over 650 participants in our different weekly groups. The participants and volunteers have developed the project from walking groups to include other activities such as badminton, dance, new age kurling, table tennis, indoor bowling, football, netball, and rugby.

“Our volunteers form very close bonds with our members and have organised social gatherings as well as taking holidays together and supporting each other through emotional hardships. In that sense Ageing Well Midlothian has become a vital cog in the local community for our members.

“Throughout lockdown our volunteers regularly contacted participants to ensure they were well and catered for. Initially we collected shopping and medication for some of our participants, while laterally our volunteers offered to walk with individuals or small groups.

“For many it was a rehabilitation. 20% of our members reported falls during lockdown, and so our volunteers had to rebuild their confidence to get out walking again.”

The Midlothian group were commended at the first ever Paths for All virtual awards ceremony hosted by BBC Scotland’s Fiona Stalker on November 4.

Ageing Well Midlothian were among 13 different winners at the 11th annual volunteers awards.

Joe FitzPatrick, Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing, said: “Thanks to the hard work of these volunteers, many more people now live a healthier and happier lifestyle.

“It has been truly inspiring to learn about the work the volunteers have done in their local community who have, collectively, made walking a bigger part of daily life and

helped incite important behavioural change.

“I’d especially like to extend my thanks to the selfless work the volunteers have carried out in light of the current pandemic by altering their normal work to help out in a variety of other ways.”

Ian Findlay CBE, Chief Officer at Paths for All, said: “Getting outside and going for a walk has been even more important than normal over the last few months for our physical and mental wellbeing.

“The invaluable work of volunteers’ in improving the nation’s physical, mental and social health is amazing, and even though we can’t host our usual Volunteer Award event, we still wanted to celebrate the fantastic work that is happening up and down the country.

“Volunteers, like Vivian and the Ageing Well Midlothian group have carried out tremendous work and adapted their work during the Covid-19 pandemic to reflect the changing needs of the Scottish public and for that we have to say a massive thank you.

“Their stories are always inspiring – and this year seems that little more exceptional.”

Paths for All works with the Scottish Government and 30 partners to support and deliver national policies, such as the National Walking Strategy and other ‘active travel’ initiatives.

The charity awards thousands of pounds worth of grants to worthwhile projects that improve health, promote walking and improve environments for people to be active in.

To find out more about which Health Walks you can join in Midlothian [click here](#)