

Portobello walking group lauded for its dementia friendly inclusivity

Caring citizens win coveted active travel award

A dedicated group of individuals who run a weekly walking group have been recognised by the nation's walking charity at its annual awards presentation.



Portobello Prom – Ageing Well has won the prestigious Dementia Friendly Walking Volunteer Group of the Year at [Paths for All](#)'s Volunteer Awards.

The group, set up with Edinburgh Leisure, enables individuals to walk at a leisurely pace across the seaside promenade as a

way of keeping people active and connected who may otherwise struggle to do so. More than 20 participants join the walks on a weekly basis, some of whom live with dementia. The Ageing Well team has accommodated those individuals through specialist training which has been coordinated by Paths for All and Edinburgh Leisure.

Volunteer Walk Leader, David Simpson said: "The group was set up many years ago to provide people with an outlet to come and interact with others while also keeping active.

"There is a huge variety of individuals who attend our walks and some of those people do live with dementia, for them – and their loved ones and carers – it's a great chance to get out and about and speak with other people who may be living with something similar."

"As Walk Leaders we try and do our best to keep the participants happy and motivated."

"While keeping active is great, it's the social aspect of walking which I feel is really powerful, and so becoming a Walk Leader was an easy way to give back to my community."

Kay Parsons, Active Communities Supervisor (Volunteers) at Edinburgh Leisure, said: "Winning the Paths for All's Dementia Friendly Walking Volunteer Group of the Year 2023 award is testament to the hard work, friendliness, and ability of all the volunteers to make those attending feel included and welcome.

"The Ageing Well Portobello Walking group volunteers have been going for years, keeping our Dementia Friendly walk going in all weathers in Scotland. They go up and down Portobello Prom, and for many of our 20-30 odd weekly participants, this is the only time they get outside into the fresh air.

"They get to enjoy the seaside air, a stroll and a chat and tea in a cafe afterwards. The volunteers keep them motivated

and laughing, and one participant told me she “forgets she has Dementia when on a walk with the volunteers.”

Hosted by the BBC Scotland’s Fiona Stalker, with awards presented by sponsoring MSP Nicola Sturgeon, the event recognised 10 groups and individuals throughout Scotland who have gone the extra mile to keep their communities active.



Maree Todd, Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport “Supporting people in Scotland to walk and wheel is a key part of our vision of a country where more people are more active, more often.

“A huge number of highly motivated and skilled people are helping us deliver this vision, especially the passionate volunteers who do so much to help others overcome challenges to participation and facilitate activities across the country.

“They really are inspirational, the recognition from Paths for All in these Awards is very well deserved.”

Kevin Lafferty, Chief Executive Officer at Paths for All, said: “Every year I am blown away at the number of incredible

groups and volunteers out there determined to make a difference. The work carried out by volunteers is directly improving the nation's physical, mental and social health, reducing social isolation and loneliness and helping people make more environmentally friendly lifestyle choices.

"It's been fantastic hosting the awards at the Scottish Parliament again this year, I always enjoy getting to socialise with our amazing volunteers and hear first-hand about the invaluable contributions they have been making.

"Thank you to everyone for their efforts and ongoing dedication."

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' initiative to improve the mental, social and physical health of the country.

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 – making for a happier, healthier, greener Scotland.

<https://www.edinburghleisure.co.uk/ageing-well-walks>

<http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/volunteerawards>