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Happy
New
Olympic
Year



Well ahead of the rest... that's
Derbyshire's 'Village Olympics'

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CHESTERFIELD-DRONFIELD-MATLOCK-BAKEWELL AND SURROUNDING AREAS

The Village Games project has led to several Zumba classes being started across Derbyshire, including this one in Crich.



Chairobics and Zumba

– just two of Derbyshire’s Olympic sports!

The Village Games is bringing sporting activities to local communities in Derbyshire – and it’s proving so successful that it is set to be rolled out in other counties across the UK. Catherine Roth discovers why.



Above: Hayley Bramley, the Village Games officer for N.E. Derbyshire.

THE Village Games is a three-year pilot project run by the Community Sports Trust. It aims to encourage sporting events and increase physical activity among all age groups in rural communities as well as helping people make new friends and have some fun. Now in its third year, the Village Games is preparing for its final – and busiest – year as it continues its work while also organising its very own Olympic events, bringing the 2012 celebrations to the heart of Derbyshire.

Lissa Cook from Community Sports Trust says: “We want



Above: Participants in a N.E. Derbyshire netball tournament that was one of many Village Games projects in 2011.

to inspire local people of all ages and abilities in villages across the county to get active. Rural villages face particular problems – lack of public transport, lower earnings, more time spent commuting, lack of facilities like leisure centres and gyms, social networks breaking down as shops, post offices and pubs close – all of which can make it difficult to play sport. We think we’ve developed an innovative model of how to achieve this by recruiting qualified professionals to work with local communities to set up activities right on their doorstep.”

The list of activities on offer is endless with everything from abseiling through to Zumba. As a result of the Village Games, villagers across North East Derbyshire and the Dales have taken up running, participated in team sports including netball and cricket, and become involved with trampolining, Pilates and archery, as well as kettlercise (a fitness workout using light weights) and boccea

(an Italian game similar to bowls). Activities are suited to all ages and abilities and include bump and baby strolls, family activity days, and chairobics – chair-based exercises for older people.

The Village Games project was spearheaded by Hayley Lever, who has worked in sports development for over 10 years. In her own village of Chinley, she witnessed at first hand how successful the voluntary Community Association was in involving local people in sport. Hayley says: “A group of volunteers got together with the parish council to ask people in the village what they wanted.

“Five years on, we have a thriving free cinema, we’ve refurbished the community centre, drained the football pitches, resurfaced the netball court, and even have our own fell race. There are over a dozen activities and clubs to choose from, with three netball teams, girls’ football, family sports, a cycling club and much more.



"Friends visit from London and Birmingham and joke that we have more going on here than they have at home."

Hayley Lever, determined to build on this initiative, was convinced it presented a blueprint that could work equally as well in other villages throughout Derbyshire, and which would encourage people of all ages and abilities to become more active.

With support and funding from partners including Sport England, Derbyshire County PCT, Derbyshire County Council and the rural District Councils, The Community Sports Trust launched the Village Games in 2010.

Over 100 villages are now benefiting from the Village Games. A quarter of these are in North East Derbyshire and the Derbyshire Dales.

Hayley Bramley is the Village Games Officer for North East Derbyshire and much of her time is spent in primary schools, Sure Start centres and cafes where she talks to local people and finds out what they would like to see in their communities.



Above: It might not have made the Olympic Games yet, but tug o' war is very much part of Village Games Derbyshire-style!



In Renishaw, the school had a new sports hall that was not being fully used. Hayley incorporated this factor into her planning and now the venue is used two or three times a week by schoolchildren as well as adult groups, with a local instructor offering sessions in Boxercise, Zumba and T'ai Chi. Hayley explains that with all these sessions, there has to be an openness and willingness to take on ideas.

Hayley has also been delivering multi-games sessions in Clay Cross for a sheltered housing association and says: "I take a bag of equipment, such as skittles, bowls and hoopla with me, and I give the residents the chance to be active. This doesn't mean running around but, for the elderly, keeping their minds active – be it through remembering scores, picking teams or coming up with new ideas for games." Indeed the residents were so enthusiastic they soon wanted to take over the running of the sessions themselves and are now looking to buy their own equipment to take round the sheltered housing complex.

And with the Olympics coming to London this summer, organisers at the Village Games are going to be busier than ever running events and offering advice, inspiration and ideas. There will also be plenty of support for those who wish to organise their own events. These will include a workshop and information pack covering everything from risk

assessments to ideas for games and activities as well as Village Games bunting, template certificates and scorecards.

Plans are also underway to organise a series of activities to tie in with the Olympic torch relay when it passes through Derbyshire. Hayley Bramley is particularly excited that the torch will pass through Calow, near Chesterfield, and is already busy coordinating a packed programme of events that will include the Calow Junior Netball Club taking part in a shooting competition as well as a variety of Olympic style mini events.

Despite the three year project ending in 2013, it is hoped that the activities brought about by the Village Games will continue. Lissa says: "People are enthused and excited and we want villages to run events and activities that will continue beyond that and become part of the fabric of village life." Like the Olympic torch, the Village Games is shining a light, bringing new opportunities and health benefits to the people of rural Derbyshire, with the promise of a legacy that will remain long after the Olympic Games are over.

Editor's note: The Village Games are looking for volunteers to help with the running of activities and events. For further details visit: www.villagegames.org.uk or contact Project Manager Hayley Lever: hayley@communitysportstrust.co.uk

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Above: The Terminus Bowling Club in Chesterfield have taken part in Village Games events.