



Coleraine Cougars

Special Olympics Basketball

Jonathon Fillis and Gavin Curran are two young men who have a learning disability and benefit from the Northern Trust's Day Opportunities Programme.

As part of their Day Opportunities they are supported by their Co-ordinator, Sunita Lall, to access social and leisure activities. Sunita works closely with her service users to provide a package that meets each individual's needs and aspirations. Sunita linked up with her local Borough Council to seek out any recreational sports programmes/activities that our service users could avail of as both men were very keen to try new things and be part of their local community.

Special Olympics Basketball is a newly established provision, Jonathon McFadden from the Coleraine Borough Council was keen to provide adults with learning disabilities with the support required to enable them to avail of this opportunity.

Both clients have really developed their interpersonal skills and as a result of this they have become more confident in themselves which further contributed to the success of other opportunities within their package, such as Social Enterprise provision where they learn the skills required for the world of work and college.

Jonathon McFadden from the Borough council said,

"For seven months now Gavin and Jonathan have been members of the new Coleraine Cougars Basketball Club. They both arrived at the club with no previous experience in the sport and have learned the techniques and skills of this fast paced sport in a short time. They have also learned how to be part of a team and develop a teamwork ethic.

They have participated in league games for the club and have travelled to various parts of Northern Ireland (Antrim, Lisnaskea and Londonderry). The club currently sits top of Division 1 of the Special Olympics Ulster basketball league.

In March 2013 they competed, as part of a nine man squad, at the Ulster Regional Games in Antrim and became Ulster Regional champions by claiming the gold medal, a title they will now hold until 2017. They will now go



forward into a pool of players to get picked to represent Ulster at national level next year.

They have participated in four league games and have just completed the double in their first season. Coleraine Cougars have just added the Special Olympics to their Ulster Regional title at the Aura Leisure Centre, Letterkenny. This has been an amazing accomplishment for a group of players who until August last year, had never participated in basketball on a competitive level. The end awards ceremony on Friday 14 June 2013 was a very happy occasion where the players were able to celebrate the success. Gavin was delighted to be awarded Sportsman of the year.

Gavin and Jonathan are enthusiastic popular members of the club and enjoy training with a smile on their face; they both are a pleasure to coach”.

Gavin said “It is fun, I have made loads of good friends and I have got on well with the basketball.”

Jonathon said “It is good, good exercise. I really enjoy running and shooting into the basketball net.”

Sunita has noticed an increase in their fitness levels and confidence since commencing the sport and will continue to support Jonathon and Gavin in developing their skills in Basketball to enable them to compete for the club.

Gavin Curran



Jonathan Fillis

