

A decade of students making a difference in Tower Hamlets wins University top sports award



A University leadership programme which has seen students working to support their local community for the last ten years has won an award at the London Sport Awards.

The annual awards, which are supported by the City of London Corporation, celebrate the outstanding work being done throughout the city to help people play sport and enjoy all the social, physical, and mental wellbeing benefits which regular activity provides.

And earlier this week the QMSU Community Foundation programme at Queen Mary University of London was among the winners after impressing judges in the Enhancing the Workforce Award category in association with Chipotle.

The sports leadership and workforce development programme is run by the University's students union and provides students with the opportunity to make a positive difference in Tower Hamlets, where the University is based.

Students taking part work with local schools and sports clubs as coaches, mentors, or match officials. They can also group together to run their own initiatives which raise awareness of barriers facing the local community and help people to overcome challenges to become active on a regular basis. Others also deliver the University's sports camps which help local young people stay active during school holidays.

Not only does the programme provide significant support to people in Tower Hamlets, it also helps the students taking part to develop new skills, gain additional qualifications, and ultimately improve their long-term job prospects.

In the last 12 months the programme has recruited and trained 45 community leaders, while also delivering a social cohesion sport programme and establish a young leaders academy.

Ashley Marshalleck, who oversaw the QMSU Community Foundation between 2016 and 2023 before moving to a new role at Sport England, explained: "Being based in Tower Hamlets presents us with the opportunity to engage with traditionally under-engaged groups.

“We decided our workforce should do more than deliver sport for the sake of sport, and students design and deliver projects which use sport as a vehicle to raise awareness of issues such as childhood obesity, inactivity, anti-social behaviour and gang culture, discrimination, and inequality.

“Since the programme started in 2013 we have seen more than 51,000 participant engagements in free and low-cost sport opportunities led by students. Our student leaders have logged more than 10,000 hours of sport and physical activity and more than 550 students have engaged in leadership opportunities through our programmes.”

But what does it mean to win? Ashley added: “There are so many unsung heroes who are using the power of sport to change lives. Being recognised as one of them is an honour.

“This recognition helps demonstrate the fantastic service of our student workforce within the community. Winning this award is the perfect way to celebrate the tenth year of our programme.”