

YOUTH PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVE

NATIONAL 2015 CONFERENCE

PERTH CONCERT HALL

WEDNESDAY 10TH JUNE 2015

REPORT

by David & Amelia Kerr

Representing Rockvale Rebound Talking Newspaper

We were thrilled to be asked to represent Rockvale Rebound Talking Newspaper at the YPI National 2015 Conference. We arrived at Perth Concert Hall at about 10.45am on a beautiful sunny Wednesday morning. After registration, we joined the winning school teams, their teachers, and their chosen charities in the glass foyer. During this time the winning teams were photographed with their giant cheques. We entered the main concert hall at 12.00 noon for the start of the conference.

Jonathan Christie, National Manager for YPI, with responsibility of overseeing the whole project in Scotland, introduced the participants.

Sir Ian Wood, Chairman of the Wood Foundation, explained the purpose of YPI and how it takes an innovative approach to directing grants to local charities by involving secondary school students in the decision-making process. It works with schools to develop students' knowledge and skills as active and informed philanthropists, in order to help them bring about positive and lasting change in their communities.

The audience was informed that the Wood Foundation launched YPI in Scotland in September 2008. During the 2014/15 academic year alone 145 Secondary Schools were involved, with 18,000 students and 24 Participating Local Authorities taking part resulting in some £345,000 being directed to small local charities.

A number of acts performed at the conference. The first was Daniel Mutch & Band, singer/songwriters from Aberdeen who recently supported Beautiful South and have performed at the Edinburgh Fringe and on STV. The final act before the interval was The Big Noise which is an orchestra programme that aims to use music-making to foster confidence, teamwork, pride and aspiration in the children taking part. The orchestras are set up in deprived areas such as Raploch and Govanhill.

Matt Cardle who was crowned the winner of the 7th series of The X Factor was the final act of the day. He sang a number of his hits, including "When we Collide" which sold over 1 million copies.

Videos were shown of some of the 145 winning school teams from all over Scotland – as far afield as Unst in the Shetlands in the North, to Dumfries & Galloway in the South, and from the Hebrides in the West to Aberdeen in the East.

The Vale of Leven Academy was one of the schools selected to showcase their presentation. Two teams from the school attended – the winning team supporting Rockvale Rebound Talking Newspaper, and the runners up supporting Women's Aid.

Laura, Abby and Jennifer, The Rockvale Rebound team, gave an excellent performance, especially considering they were the youngest team and they performed in front of an audience of some 2,000 people.

Their performance came in the form of a drama with Laura acting as narrator, Jennifer as an elderly blind lady called Jess who wears dark glasses and uses a white guiding cane, and Abby as the elderly blind lady's carer called Val.

The first scene took place a few years ago in Jess's home. Jess and Val walked in and had a conversation about the weather and Jess asked if the sun was shining. Jess then went on to say how much she missed being able to pick up a paper or magazine and read what was happening in her area. She asked Val if she could read to her, but Val was very busy and said she was sorry but she didn't have time to read to her. Laura explained that Jess felt very isolated and lonely because she couldn't read and therefore wasn't able to keep up with what was happening in her area.

Fast forward to the present day and Val is working away folding washing when Jess said she was just going to listen to the latest tape she'd received from Rockvale Rebound and then she would have a blether later with her friends about the contents of the tape. The start of On the Rebound magazine was played on the tape player. Val said she was really pleased that Rockvale Rebound were sending her tapes now.

Laura went on to tell the audience that the tapes are provided completely free by Rockvale Rebound. They have changed the lives of many people, including Jess as they are now able to keep up with what's going on around them and can communicate with their friends as a result.

A second team from Vale of Leven Academy representing Women's Aid gave a short presentation using balloons to demonstrate a build-up of tension.

The Vale of Leven Academy presentation ended with a video of Laura, Jennifer and Abby visiting Rockvale Rebound's studio at West Bridgend during a committee meeting. They announced that they had won the competition and that Rockvale Rebound would receive a cheque for £3,000 as a result. Some 2,000 people simultaneously burst into laughter when the tape ended with Bobby saying, "Have you got the cheque there like?"

Other winning teams also showcased their winning presentations for worthy charities such as monitoring for sudden cardiac arrests in the young, and support for young people being sexually abused,

Josh Littlejohn, entrepreneur, also spoke at the conference. He is the person behind the very successful Scottish Business Awards, and Social Bites sandwich bars that are run on the basis of a social enterprise with all profits going to identified good causes, and a quarter of their staff team made up from formerly homeless people.

There was a video from Mark Beaumont, Scottish record-breaking long-distance cyclist, adventurer, broadcaster, documentary maker and author came next. Mark is an ambassador for the Wood Foundation and encouraged young people to go ahead with their dreams as he explained how his determination had got him where he is today.

STV presenter Andrea Brymer introduced some inspiring young people. The first was Lucy Lintott who is the youngest person to have been diagnosed with Motor Neuron Disease in Scotland, who would celebrate her 21st birthday on the following Sunday. She was wheeled on to the stage in a wheelchair and went on to tell everyone about her struggle to find out about the disease when she was first diagnosed in December 2013. She has drawn up a bucket list of things she'd like to do while she is still able, one of which is to donate £100,000 to Motor Neuron Disease Scotland. She started up a Facebook page called Lucy's Fight and has already raised £53,000 towards her goal.

Andrea then introduced pupils from Tain Academy who, 3 years ago, had started up a charity called Speak which supports young people with mental issues when they found out there was nowhere in the Highlands for young people with mental issues to go to for help. Since then several school YPI teams have chosen Speak as their charity and as a result Speak have received £12,000 over the years from YPI.

Before the final act from Matt Cardle, a vote of thanks to everyone involved with YPI Scotland was given by Garreth Wood, Trustee of the Wood Foundation.

The event finished at about 3.40pm at which time the young students made their way to the coaches for their return home and we headed to the car for our drive back to Alexandria.

We had a marvellous time and thoroughly enjoyed attending this event. It was amazing to see so many young people willing to give up their own time, and go the extra mile in numerous ways to help others. We can only congratulate them all and say how especially proud we were, and are, of the winning Vale of Leven Academy Team who worked so hard and put in so much effort to enable them to win the YPI competition. Because of their efforts Rockvale Rebound Talking Newspaper have received the amazing sum of £3,000 which, the Chairman Bobby Simpson MBE assured everyone at a recent AGM, would be put to great use.