



Yes We Can Newsletter Easter 2024

April 2024

Editorial:

As “Yes We Can” enters its seventh year Rotary are thrilled that the program continues to develop and strengthen its position as the largest integrated disability sports initiative in Bedfordshire.

It is incredibly rewarding to see the impact that sport is having on individuals young and old, who have so many challenges in life and later in this update you will read some testimonials from parents whose young people have been part of the Rotary “Yes We Can” journey.

Our objective remains accessible, affordable and sustainable sports opportunities for those with a disability in Leighton-Linslade and South West Bedfordshire.

Often Leighton-Linslade is the forgotten part of Bedfordshire but when it comes to Disability Sport, we can all be proud that we are building a true centre of excellence.

Football:

In the last twelve months the Football element of Yes We Can has developed significantly, moving to affiliate with local grassroots club Leighton Park Rangers and truly connecting into the community.

With a growth of 33% in registered participant's to nearly 40 players, the squad now fields a U14 team and 2 x Adult teams when it attends the Berks, Bucks & Oxford Inclusion League Tournaments.

Leighton Park Rangers have been brilliant partners, and the new kit is superb, even having a map of Leighton Buzzard embedded in the shirt.

We are incredibly lucky to have a quite outstanding lead coach in Richard Hird and at Oak Bank Academy we have facilities that any sports team would be envious of.



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Golf:

The latest development comes with news hot off the press that “Yes We Can” is in advanced talks with Leighton Buzzard Golf Club to add Golf to its menu of sports.

This will be an exciting development in 2024 and comes after Woburn Golf Club invited “Yes We Can” to attend the 2023 G4D open.



Hockey:

Leighton Buzzard Hockey Club continue to be outstanding partners in the delivery of field hockey and under the leadership of Josh Gale, Sunday hockey sessions are a fun and enjoyable experience for the participants and spectators.

We have been thrilled to recently announce that local solicitors, Osborne, Morris & Morgan have renewed their support for Yes We Can and specifically Hockey whose participants are proud to wear their YWC/ OMM training kit.



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Invictus:

Yes We Can has also been delighted to partner with the Leighton Linslade Schools Sports Partnership to sponsor their Invictus Games offering to Years 7/8 children in the five local middle schools.

This initiative seeks to engage with children with SEND and provide five special sports sessions through the school year, one each of athletics, cricket and football with an additional two multi sports events.

We sincerely hope this will encourage more children with SEND to engage in sport outside school and keep them active.



Running:

Yes We Can doesn't specifically have a running section, but it would be remiss of us not to mention the achievements of Joe Langdon and his fantastic medal haul.

Joe is out and about running 5k, 10k and half marathons most weekends and of course raising funds for YWC by competing in the local Dirt Half Marathon.

He is not the only mad runner in the YWC family as Football coach Richard is often to be found running with Joe at various events and this year Richard is running 3, yes 3 Ultra Marathon's to raise funds for YWC.

If you would like to support him this is the link <https://rb.gy/il184l>



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Sailing:

We are all looking forward to the 2024 Sailing season when once again our partners MK Sailability will be launching the boats on Caldecotte Lake, Milton Keynes.

The wonderful Pippa has had a winter makeover and will look splendid in the spring/ summer sunshine.

Of course, our own Hansa, Karen Daisy will also be on the water providing an opportunity for new and experienced sailors to test their skills under the expert tutelage of the Sailability volunteers.

If you haven't tried sailing, you really should apart from anything else the tea and cake are wonderful.



Tennis:

Well, the big news in Tennis is I suppose off the court where our coach Sara has become a mum with the arrival of Oscar. We all send our warmest congratulations to Sara some of the pictures are out of this world.

Back on court we are delighted that Jack has seamlessly stepped into Sara's on court shoes and Tennis sessions on Friday & Saturday continue as does help on a more individual basis for some participants.



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Outreach:

Our outreach provision goes from strength to strength regularly delivering sports sessions to Mencap (Friends Within) Beds Inclusive Girl Guides and Freddie and Friends.

We have ambitions to help other disability groups when the opportunity arises.

We were also delighted that some participants from our outreach were able to attend our YWC Oscar Awards Event.



Testimonials:

We are lucky to receive feedback from a number of sources in relation to the impact that “Yes We Can” has on participants the following are just three such examples.

Parent C

Yes We Can has literally changed my son's life. I had been looking for an inclusive club that my son could join, and I found Yes We Can, and I am so glad that I did.

He has grown in confidence so much since joining tennis 3 years ago, and it has had a massive impact on his whole life.

The tennis coaches have been absolutely fantastic with him, and so patient and he now has a real love for tennis.

He really feels part of a family being part of Yes We Can, as do I, and I cannot thank you enough.

He has grown in confidence to also play football with Yes We Can and take part in other activities and I truly believe this would not have been possible without the support of all who are involved with the Yes We Can team.

This newfound confidence has enabled him to build friendships within Yes We Can and also at school which is something he struggled with before.

You have given him a new sense of self-belief and I owe this all to Yes We Can.

Long may the clubs continue. Thank you so much.



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Parent E

My son is autistic and has recently started showing an interest in after school activities. He wanted to access programs like his peers but as he needs one to one as a safeguarding measure this was not possible for him.

I offered to help in whatever way I could but unfortunately, there was no possibility.

This truly made us feel left out, lost and disappointed that he was not considered for these programs.

I then remembered about Yes We Can and reached out.

They were helpful, kind and immediately responded to us with an option for him.

We were truly amazed and felt blessed that he could now have an opportunity to be in a club. Even better one that understands his needs and are patient and kind.

These clubs are so important and vital for those who don't have the option of joining a club that caters for them. It is a great environment, and it is nice to talk to and learn from other parents who are also trying to do the best for their children.

This is one of the best support systems that we have found.

I only wish I knew this existed for my older child as it helps in them and us not feeling so alone.

Parent T

Yes We Can Tennis offers an amazing opportunity for youngsters with disabilities.

The coaches are fantastic at supporting everyone, whatever their ability or the challenges they have to overcome.

The sessions gradually build and develop the youngster's tennis skills and enables them to improve their physical skills and fitness.

But importantly, the sessions also develop social skills, self-esteem and confidence.

It is great to have the sessions in Leighton Buzzard as so often families have to travel miles to access activities and it also means that families feel part of their local community.

We cannot praise Yes We Can enough, and Leighton Buzzard should be very proud to have this wonderful inclusive opportunity within the community.

We sincerely hope the tennis sessions will continue to grow and develop and be available for many years to come as they are so valuable in improving fitness, physical skills, social skills and mental health and well being, thus reducing isolation and valuing so many wonderful youngsters within our community.



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Oscar Awards Event:

A date is now confirmed for our 2024 awards event which will take place on Sunday October 6th at Brooklands Residents Club where our guest of honour will be Paula Craig MBE an outstanding athlete who has achieved things some can only dream of and is a true inspiration.

We are also delighted that once again the event will be sponsored by our wonderful friends and partners OMM Solicitors.

Date for your diaries
6th October 2024



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Acknowledgments:

The Rotary “Yes We Can” program would not exist without the following, so we thank them all, Rotary YWC Team, Leighton Park Rangers, Leighton Buzzard Hockey Club, MK Sailability, Otters Swimming Club, Outreach Team and Linslade Tennis Club, and soon to be Leighton Buzzard Golf Club and their coaches and volunteers.

Additionally, we thank OMM Solicitors, Leighton-Linslade Town Council and Bedfordshire & Luton Community Foundation who through their support make the program accessible to so many individuals.



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