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Adrian Woods, Pit Stop 2000

Enterprise Finance Guarantee helps Pit Stop into the fast lane

It started with a single go-kart and a simple aim – to help young people to become active, honest citizens.

Today the praise of the Queen, Princess Anne and the Prime Minister is testament to how triumphantly Pit Stop 2000 has achieved this ambition.

The award-winning social enterprise began in a deprived part of Halifax 19 years ago. Adrian Woods and Paul Craft were looking for a way to divert youngsters from “nicking cars and motorbikes”. Go-kart races seemed just the thing.

The youth group proved so popular that Pit Stop 2000 eventually developed into a fully-fledged social enterprise, established as a company limited by guarantee.

Adrian says Business Link Yorkshire has been crucial to the transformation. “They have been superb for us and they have always been there supporting us and giving us advice.

“We learned how to do a proper trade show. They gave us advice on all kinds of issues including employment rights, and we’ve attended Business Link training courses too.”

Today Pit Stop 2000 employs 17 people – four of whom began as young attendees – turns over £240,000 a year and clocks up 22,000 visits annually from young people aged between seven and 19. Its activities include rock climbing, camping, kayaking, beekeeping and even a fish farm in Wakefield.

And in keeping with its origins, the enterprise has recently bought its own go-karting track in Bradford.

“Everything we do is to make that child come through the door,” said Adrian. “They all want to go go-karting. The funding we receive through winning contracts means that no child pays directly for Pit Stop so it’s accessible to everyone.”

Pit Stop 2000 works with organisations such as the Calderdale youth offending team to provide early intervention,

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diverting children away from crime. Adrian says the youngsters are “educated by stealth. There’s nothing like us in the country.”

They can undertake community awards or receive help to get GCSEs and other qualifications – laptops equipped with speech-recognition software help children who struggle to read and write.

Pit Stop 2000 won the Social Enterprise Of The Year award in 2008. Its work was featured on GMTV.

Pit Stop’s success also earned Adrian an MBE from the Queen who described Pit Stop as “simply stunning”. Princess Anne was also full of praise when she visited recently and, Adrian says, “Gordon Brown has mentioned us a few times in the party conferences”.

Providing the service is very hard work and Adrian is grateful for the support he has received from Business Link.

“They’ve shown us what to do, when to do it and how to do it,” he said. “They’ve done us proud.”

Business Link adviser Rupert Shires said: “Adrian lives and breathes Pit Stop and drives the whole thing forward. It’s a pleasure to be involved with an exemplary social enterprise.

“We have supported a consultant who has undertaken strategic planning with them. This has leading to a vision of where they are and where they want to be in three years’ time. Business Link will be with them all the way.”

NB: A social enterprise is a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are reinvested for that purpose rather than being driven by the need to deliver profit to shareholders or owners. (DTI, Social Enterprise Strategy 2002)

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