Birmingham Students Coach it to South Africa

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A team of athletic University of Birmingham students are bound for South Africa to help engage aspiring coaches and raise youth awareness of HIV and AIDS through sport.

Six students - Jessica Costin, Rosie Hatton, George Bellefontaine, Ben Graney, Joe Johnson, and Ben Tattoo - are taking a range of sports equipment to teach football, basketball, netball and volleyball and many other sports to disadvantaged youngsters from several communities in South Africa.

The placements are part of SCORE (Sports Coaches Outreach) on the Move, a South Africa based initiative aimed at empowering local community coaches and youth with sustainable quality sport and technical skills. It also combines sport with life skills education relating to HIV/AIDS awareness.

As part of the placements, which are part-funded by the University of Birmingham Alumni Fund, UK Sport, University Sport Birmingham and the students themselves, the Birmingham volunteers will work with coaches and young people from several communities.

Anna Simpson, Volunteer Development Manager, at the University of Birmingham, said: “This is a fantastic life-changing opportunity for the students to use the skills and experience they have gained here to make a difference internationally through sport.

“It has been a rewarding year of hard work in fundraising and preparing for this project and we would like to thank the Alumni Fund for supporting us. We hope this first year will make a real impact for sustainable HIV/AIDS and sport education in the communities and that the students will personally develop through this amazing initiative.”

HIV/AIDS is – to a large extent – a disease of children and young people. The majority of those who are newly infected with HIV are aged less than 24. Their infection rates are increasing. Sports give the children joy and hope, opportunities to learn while playing with others. Using sports to educate children about HIV/AIDS can help them protect their own lives in an environment filled with positive energy. Through sports they can acknowledge the epidemic and learn the life skills to survive it.

SCORE work in six of the nine provinces in South Africa and identify communities to deliver the KICKING AIDS OUT message through sport. The team of Birmingham students will be working in communities in the Mpumalanga province where poverty and HIV/AIDS are prevalent. They will be living with families during their stay and may therefore face the everyday issues of a local in living in these communities.

Ends

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Notes to Editor

University Sport Birmingham (USB) University Sport Birmingham:

• University Sport Birmingham at the University of Birmingham aims to enhance the sporting experience of the University and its wider community by providing opportunities at all levels.

• The University is a Centre for Excellence for many sports including athletics, squash, hockey, gymnastics and triathlon.

• The University offers Sports Scholarships to support students who compete at international level of their sport. Past recipients of a Scholarship include Allison Curbishley (Athletics 400m Olympic finalist); Shelley Newman (nee Drew, Athletics discus Commonwealth Games medalist); Tom Bertram (Olympic Hockey team) and Melanie Easter (Paralympic Swimming Champion).

www.uksport.gov.uk

www.score.org.za

www.kickingaidsout.net

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