

22 June 2011

Award recognition for junk drumming group

How do you combat hateful language and closed minds using old pots, plastic buckets and a kitchen sink?

If you're Alan Metcalfe, Community Youth Officer at Connect Housing, you gather a bunch of kids together from different schools across East Leeds (where social and cultural divides are particularly deep), and get them busy making percussion instruments out of assorted bits of junk.

Thus was born Junk Beatz, which has been making noise in and around Leeds for over a year. The project has been a huge success, and to top it off Alan has just won the **Outstanding Individual Award** in the National Housing Federation's regional What We Are Proud Of awards for his devotion to the club. A beaming Alan received the award at a ceremony at the Royal York Hotel on Saturday, 18 June, with members of Junk Beatz cheering him on.

With funding for rehearsal space and musical direction spent, and with the children growing older and moving onto other things, Junk Beatz will give their last performance at the colourful 2011 Seacroft Gala, which will take place on the Seacroft Village Green on 2 July from 12-4pm. Seacroft is an economically deprived part of East Leeds which several members of Junk Beatz call home, and makes a fitting finale to the group's career.

Amid the sadness of seeing the club wind down, Alan can take pride in knowing that Junk Beatz has helped to broaden the kids' horizons by introducing them to people from different cultures and different walks of life, and by giving them a taste of the thrill which comes from performing music in front of an audience. That sense of accomplishment, and of belonging to a wider community, can be nothing short of transformative.

The friendship of its members, however, is the most significant lasting legacy of Junk Beatz, as there is planted the seeds of future understanding and a strengthening of community feeling across East Leeds.

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Alan Metcalfe, Community Youth Officer at Connect Housing would be happy to talk about the inspiration and work which went into Junk Beatz, and can be reached on 07985 887 548, 0300 5000 600 or by email at alan.metcalfe@connecthousing.org.uk.



Alan Metcalfe with his Outstanding Individual award; Alan with members of Junk Beatz

For high resolution versions of these photographs, please contact David Troupes on 0300 5000 600 or david.troupes@connecthousing.org.uk. Photographs of Junk Beatz performing are also available.

Notes

- Junk Beatz was jointly funded by Connect Housing, Find Your Talent and the Seacroft Manston Cluster of Extended Services (part of Education Leeds).
- Connect staff run a variety of activities for children of different ages, including an Arts Club and a Warhammer Games Club.
- Connect Housing is a not-for-profit housing association with approximately 3,000 homes across West Yorkshire.