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Beijing Games from the inside

John Reardon, of Springcroft Avenue, was in the midst of the excitement of the Paralympic Games in Beijing. Here he recalls this unforgettable experience.

As an avid sports fan, I enthusiastically followed the Olympics this summer, and when presented with the opportunity to travel to Beijing for the Paralympics, I couldn't have packed my bags more quickly.

After the success of the Olympics, I was excited to see what the Paralympics had in store. I went to Beijing to attend the British Council's Young Advocate Programme, a forum that promotes intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and the development of civil society. 240 advocates from around the world, including 120 young people from China and Hong Kong, 100 from the UK and 20 from other countries, divided equally between able-bodied and disabled 18-23 year-olds, joined together on 4 September in Beijing.

The primary aim of our project is to develop the Paralympic spirit by boosting awareness of the Paralympics and disabled sport across the world. We attended the games on several occasions, dressed head to toe in the British colours and chanting the national anthem, but most of our activities were in the Chinese disabled training camp where we were staying.

Talents revealed

Together, all the participants attended a variety of workshops aimed at enhancing the confidence, leadership and communication skills of Young Advocates to help us contribute positively in our local communities.

I personally attended a workshop held by the Northern Ballet theatre. Once I'd got into the swing of things and learnt how to boogie, I noticed how well everyone in the group had adapted to the challenge. It was remarkable to see able bodied and disabled people working together to form a piece of art, showing off the talents every one of us possesses, and after the final performance I don't think there was a dry eye in the house.

Inspiring

The opportunity to go to Beijing had a profound impact on me, bringing home the concerns of many disabled people, and how unrepresented some of them feel. I was inspired and empowered by all of the Young Advocates, who are so keen to promote the disabled cause. For me, the Paralympics in Beijing this summer was a tremendous success and so many positives can be drawn from the games and taken to London in 2012.



John Reardon enjoying the excitement of the Games

I hope that disabled sport, with the help of the Paralympics and organisations such as the YAP, will be continually encouraged and promoted across the world. Look out for the YAP and their projects, as we are now planning other ven-

tures across Britain to develop the Paralympic spirit before London 2012.

Not a lotta limericks

By Diana Cormack
None of the entries for the limerick competition to raise money for the charity Lupus UK were actually limericks, despite there being an example in September's ARCHER.

Happily, Lupus UK will still benefit, thanks to the generosity of those people who put donations instead of poems into the limerick letterbox at 2 Destino.

Such a thing as a free lunch

Budgens put on a lunch for 30 senior citizens at Paul Byrne House, Thomas More Estate, on 17 October. A great time was had by all and all guests left with a goody bag and a Budgens voucher.

The local store also put on a hot supper on 27 October for senior citizens at the Green Man Community Centre to fit in with their Bingo evening. More goody bags and vouchers were distributed.



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Glorious return for Oktoberfest

By Diana Cormack

On 26 and 27 September, East Finchley Constitutional Club in The Walks held its second Oktoberfest. Guest of honour from the German Embassy was cultural attaché Raban Richter. The festival was officially opened by the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor John Marshall, who commented as he pulled the first pump: "This pint reminds me of many speeches I have heard at planning committee: full of froth!"

Presumably he was pulling one of the 20 guest beers and ales, which were much appreciated, as was the sausage BBQ held in the club's extensive garden. Though German wine wasn't advertised, many who attended last year's Oktoberfest were expecting it and were disappointed. THE ARCHER has been assured that it will be available next year and that conversation will not be blunted by a karaoke session, as happened on the Friday night. Saturday's events went more to plan.

Chairman of the club Martin O'Donnell said: "The Oktoberfest was a tremendous success and it was great to see so many new faces in the club. We want to

make the Oktoberfest an annual event in East Finchley's cultural life, like the East Finchley Festival. It was a great opportunity to show the wonderful facilities we have at the club."

For more details phone 020 8883 4616, email club@eastfinchley.co.uk or visit www.efclub.btik.com

Baby bonus at library

Parents visiting East Finchley Library now have somewhere to change their baby, after Barnet Council installed a new changing unit.

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