



Tables continue Stephen's inspirational legacy

Author: Paul Stimpson

Posted On: October 21, 2015

The inspirational legacy of teenage cancer fundraiser and table tennis player Stephen Sutton will live on whenever players pick up a bat at one of two table tennis tables donated in his memory.

The 19-year-old dedicated his life to raising money for the Teenage Cancer Trust after being diagnosed with the disease.

He set a target of £1 million but, by the time he died in May 2014, the total had reached £3.2 million and has since grown to more than £4.9 million. He was awarded the MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours the same month he died, and his blog Stephen's Story continues to inspire people all over the world.

Now his amazing story is being commemorated by the donation of a table to his former school, Chase Terrace Technology College in Burntwood, and another to Burntwood Leisure Centre.



From left: John Swannell (Head of PE), Sandra Deaton, Brian Watkins, David Crowder (deputy headteacher)

The tables were officially unveiled today and both bear the legend 'Let Stephen Inspire You' on the playing surface.

The project is the brainchild of Brian Watkins, former chairman of Staffordshire Table Tennis Association and

club secretary of Burntwood Community Table Tennis Club, where Stephen played alongside his grandfather Tony Reeves.



Emma Birch in action on the table at the school

He organised various events, raising more than £1,500 towards the tables, which has been match-funded by Table Tennis England, the National Governing Body of the School. Table supplier Bribar also have also helped with funding.

Brian said: "Stephen was a remarkable young man. I remember he came to play on the same day as his chemo, with a smile on his face. To have met him was an honour.

"Stephen inspired me to know I could actually do this and raise the money and hopefully the table can inspire kids to get fit and active.

"The good people of Burntwood have been so supportive and a number of people, without being asked or approached, came to me and gave me money."

Brian and Table Tennis England Chairman Sandra Deaton cut the ribbon the school table.

She said: "Table tennis as a sport is the better for having had Stephen playing, it's an absolute honour for the sport to be linked to such an inspirational person."

The first pupils to play on the table were 14-year-olds Luke Gittins and Emma Birch. Luke said: "It's a brilliant idea for the school and I think table tennis at the school will grow."

Emma added: "I think people will like using it. Not many people play table tennis at the moment and I think this will change people's attitudes to it."

The school's deputy headteacher David Crowder said: "It's available any time and set up and ready to go, so the students can use it any time. I think there will be a lot of competition to get on it. I;m sure there will be demand for more tables very quickly."



Councillor Norma Bacon inaugurates the table at the leisure centre

The table at the leisure centre was 'launched' by Mrs Deaton and Councillor Norma Bacon, Chairman of Lichfield District Council, with Stephen's grandparents Tony and Ann Reeves in attendance.

Councillor Bacon said: "This fantastic table tennis table will give visitors to Burntwood Leisure Centre the opportunity to play for many years to come.

"It is such a generous donation and will remind everyone coming to the leisure centre of Stephen Sutton and his inspirational story."



Members of Burntwood Community TTC with other guests at the leisure centre

Stephen's grandmother Ann Reeves said: "It's an absolutely fantastic idea. Stephen liked sport of any kind and he like people to get up and do things, so I think he would be so proud and so pleased."

Michelle Aucott, Regional Fundraising Manager at Teenage Cancer Trust said: "Stephen was an amazing young man with a positivity that inspired a nation. This gift to his old school shows that Stephen's Story is still inspiring generosity across the UK and especially in the Burntwood community."

Downloaded From:

<https://newsarchive.tabletennisengland.co.uk/news/archived/tables-continue-stephens-inspirational-legacy/>