



July 2 2007

John Lewis department store staff help future Olympians

Staff from John Lewis stores across Hertfordshire are helping to put talented athletes on the road to future Olympics.

Donations from employees at its stores in Watford and Welwyn and its depot in Stevenage have raised £1,000 for the Hertfordshire is Ready for Winners SportsAid appeal.

John Lewis is the first business to make a donation to the charity since it was set up in Hertfordshire in May.

The charity gives companies the opportunity to help meet the training and competition costs of young athletes which for some can be as much as £5,000 a year.

The scheme was created by the Hertfordshire is Ready for Winners Partnership – a multi-agency group of organisations from the public and private sectors which was established two years ago to see how the county could benefit from the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The University of Hertfordshire is a partnership member and has helped launch the SportsAid scheme in the county.

Its director of sport Nick Brooking, who received the John Lewis cheque on behalf of the charity, said: "A scheme such as this can make a significant difference to young people who have the potential to reach the very top of their sport."

Local athlete Nonso Okolo, who last year was the top under-17 men's long jumper in the country and was also ranked second in the triple jump for his age group, was also on hand to illustrate the county's young sporting potential.

Under the SportsAid initiative for Hertfordshire businesses can make a platinum donation of £5,000, a gold contribution of £1,000, a silver donation of £500 or a bronze sum of £250.

Companies can alternatively offer corporate sponsorship or introduce payroll giving for their employees.

Businesses which decide to contribute will receive a special thank you pack which includes advertising the company's logo in Hertfordshire is Ready for Winners SportsAid's web site and on promotional material.

Every penny donated to the scheme in Hertfordshire will go towards supporting Hertfordshire athletes only.

Any business interested in becoming a sponsor should phone 01707 281183 or email donations@hertsisreadyforwinners.co.uk