



## TERESA PARRISH

I was asked to write something about my volunteering experience and in particular London 2012 and Living The Dream Trust so here it is

I have been volunteering in the Borough for nearly 30 years now, from being on the management committee of the old Barking and Dagenham Victim support and sent up the friends fundraising committee through to helping out various community associations and other local Community Groups.

However London winning the right to Host the Olympics provided the catalyst to bring into a being an idea that had been sitting with me for some time. The idea had been to set up a fund to help talented young sports men and women from Barking and Dagenham.

With the Olympics at the forefront of everyone's mind I was able to enlist support from 12 people from the community to volunteer and become trustees and Living the Dream Barking And Dagenham Trust was born.

The Trust was launched in 2007 and between then and 2012 thanks to lots of fundraising events and many hours of planning and meetings over £100,000 was raised. Since starting to award grants in 2008 over 120 grants have been awarded to 33 different individuals. Grants have ranged from £150 for an all in one swimming racing costume through to buying a racing canoe.

We have sent athletes all over the world to compete and train. For the trustees and the community it has been a real eye opener that being part of a GB squad does not mean everything gets paid. Since 2012 the trust has been in legacy mode with grants still being made but no active fundraising taking place.

Currently we have two young people who are in full time training at the British Judo centre of Excellence in Walsall one of whom is ranked number 1 in the junior rankings and number 3 in the senior rankings. The other is the current British Champion. We also have a javelin thrower who through her sporting success has won a Place at the university of Florida and is currently enjoying training full time in the sun.

I am very proud of the role that Living the Dream has played so far in these young people's success and with the next Olympics in Rio just around the corner I hope that these and some of the other people we have helped may be flying to Brazil.

I was also lucky enough to be nominated and chose to carry the Olympic torch for part of its journey through the borough on the 22nd July 2012. It was an immense hour and something that will remain in my memory for ever.

I was also chosen to be a games maker and spent 2 weeks volunteering on the Olympic Park as part of the mobility team and then a further 5 days at the Paralympics. To be part of the greatest show on earth was awesome. Pulling on that uniform each day was something I did with great pride and whether it was arranging a wheel chair or scooter for someone or driving one of the Mobility buggies around the park and the venues it great knew what I was doing was helping people enjoy the Olympic experience.

I made some fantastic new friends some of whom I still see on a regular basis , felt the buzz of being part on a team and although the days were very long sometime 14 hours plus and then travelling time the satisfaction I gained from volunteering was the best feeling in the world.

I have already applied to Volunteer at Rio and if selected who knows I could be cheering on some of our Living the Dream youngsters now wouldn't that be something.