

## Sutton United Community Team half-yearly summary, January 2015

The six-strong Community Team organises community events and projects and provides for football and other sporting activities using the facilities in and around the Gander Green Lane ground. We also have an outreach facility delivering projects across the borough. A number of really good partnerships are being established along the way, with community partners and business links. Last year, for the third year in a row, Sutton United were shortlisted for the Commitment to the Community Award having won the award the previous year.

### Events and Projects

So far this season, a number of excellent events and projects have already been undertaken. In Partnership with the Metropolitan Police Cheam & Belmont Safer Neighbourhoods Team we once again held the annual football coaching event in July for 6-11 year old boys and girls at Cheam Park. During the 5 days of football coaching 200 boys and girls enjoyed morning skills sessions and afternoon mini football tournaments coached by Sutton United's Simon Alatise and by Met Police FA Coaches with U's striker Marvin Williams also on hand.

In October, the first of this year's Community Days (in partnership with the Met Police and Smith & Byford) preceded the home game at Gander Green Lane v Bath City.



Club mascot Jenny The Giraffe is a popular figure at events all across the borough.

Despite the weather, 187 families responded to the flyer, sent to about a dozen schools, and came along to see the penalty shoot-out and watch the presentations and the game at 3pm. With Met Police cadets on hand to ensure the organisation all ran smoothly.

There was a twilight walk in aid of the SUFC's charity, St Raphael's Hospice and in November there was a World War One commemorative event to mark the 100 years since the outbreak of The Great War and the Christmas Truce of 1914. Plans are now underway for involvement in the St Helier Festival.

One highly successful project was The Stonecot Project at the Life Centre in Sutton. In association with the Safer Neighbourhoods team, as many as 40 young people took part in a four-team weekly tournament over a seven-week period. Local press reports praised the initiative and it was described as 'best practice' in a study by Sport England and was praised by the police as having great benefit for those involved and for the broader community.



At The Link School in Sutton, an eight week course took place with the following aims:

- The development of children's social interaction and communication skills
- Development of health, fitness, stamina and resilience
- Improvement in level of ball skills
- Development of interest in a sport

It was a well attended event and greatly enjoyed by all. The school was presented with a framed and signed shirt for display in the school.

## Community Partners

The Community team have forged links with many local partners. In addition to The Link School, work has been undertaken with The Harris Academy (an historical project), Wandle Valley PRU, Cheam High School and Nonsuch School (women's football). Links are strong with St Raphael's Hospice and Sutton Housing and Sutton's Got Youth Talent as well as previous charity partners Marsden Hospital Radio and Sutton Mencap.

As can be seen with the Stonecot Project there are links with Safer Neighbourhoods and the local police, police cadets, Crimestoppers and Sutton Council. Within football itself, Sutton United have been working with Chelsea Football Club and are looking to have links with QPR and Fulham FCs. Business links include those with Smith and Byford and Trusthouse Forte, London Sport and Freesport.

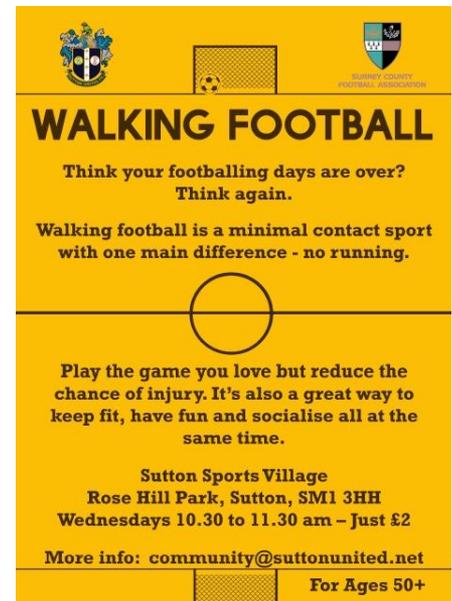
## Community Sport

Working with our partners has made it possible to offer a range of opportunities for the community to take part in a wider range of sporting activities for all ages, gender and ability closer to the home of Sutton United. There were seven disability football sessions in 2014 and twelve players are looking to represent Sutton United in a disability team. More coaching sessions and trials are planned for early 2015 with the aim of a pan-disability team taking to the field before the end of the season.

There is an awareness among the Community Team that participation in football is in decline and we are keen to help address this. Football is a game that everyone can enjoy and a woman's team is being set up as well as an older men's team.

There is funding available for a walking football team for the over-50s which will be based at The Sutton Tennis Centre and we will be taking on the organisation of this team.

We are even considering setting up a Little League. There will also be futsal and a wider range of sport for the disabled including table cricket, polybat and boccia.



The poster features a yellow background with a white border. At the top, there are three logos: Sutton United, a soccer ball, and the Surrey County Football Association. The main title 'WALKING FOOTBALL' is in large, bold, black letters. Below it, the text reads: 'Think your footballing days are over? Think again.' followed by 'Walking football is a minimal contact sport with one main difference - no running.' A large white circle is centered on the page. Below the circle, it says: 'Play the game you love but reduce the chance of injury. It's also a great way to keep fit, have fun and socialise all at the same time.' The location and time are listed as 'Sutton Sports Village, Rose Hill Park, Sutton, SM1 3HH, Wednesdays 10.30 to 11.30 am - Just £2'. At the bottom, it provides contact information: 'More info: [community@suttonunited.net](mailto:community@suttonunited.net)' and 'For Ages 50+'.

### WALKING FOOTBALL

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For Ages 50+

The facilities at Gander Green Lane and in Collingwood Recreation Ground are used for the community with the Junior Team playing at Saturday lunchtimes and the disability teams training in the Rec. There is a proposal to introduce cheerleading at the Junior games. In March it is hoped that 24 candidates will come forward to take part in a women's football coaching course. This is partly funded, meaning that each participant would need to pay just £50 to take part in the sessions and get the qualification.

Away from football, there have been a number of evening events at the ground including an evening with Jimmy White and various "evening with" events to hear ex-professional footballers talk about their experiences.

Underpinning all of the Community Team's hard work has been the drive to open doors to the community to lead an active life and come together and make friends. One parent said of the disability team session in November:

"I'd never seen my son play football before, given that football in the park was not as exciting as the swings and slides etc, so first of all it was great to see my son playing a game I love. He showed me that he had some skills such as dribbling and he showed me he was prepared to leave me and listen to others. It was good to see him in other young persons' company. He enjoyed the sessions and laughed for much of the time, got wet and got muddy. My son doesn't speak much and very, very rarely offers information but when he got home he went to his mum, looked her in the eye and said "I scored a goal". He wanted to get back for another session after the first of the recent three and is now looking forward to the February sessions. My son was clearly the most 'needy' and inexperienced member of the group but the other young people were really friendly and helpful. He made progress."

Of course, every now and again it's also very satisfying to have some success on the field and everyone was delighted when our under-11 girls side reached the final of the London Cup, where they will meet Spurs. They did it in style too, beating Charlton Athletic 11-0 in the semi-final !