



# UNITAS UPDATE

QUARTERLY UPDATE  
APRIL - JUNE 2024

## UNITAS CELEBRATES TURNING FIVE IN STYLE

On a bright sunny day, Sunday 23 June, more than 1,000 members of our local community came to Unitas Youth Zone to celebrate our fifth birthday.

Echoing our opening day in 2019, the community open day was circus-themed and every space was filled with fun and engaging activities for all ages. The free event attracted families, many visiting Unitas for the first time.

There was a celebratory atmosphere as people queued up to have a go at the coconut shy, try their hand at juggling, enter a zorb for bubble football or a sumo suit for some light-hearted wrestling, have their photo taken with an array of wacky props, play some music, paint a mask, have a go at DJing and



much more. As a Youth Zone, we serve our local community, and bring vibrancy to the area. Barnet Council have recently announced the 'Summer of Fun' as part of their strategy and we are proud to have helped kick the summer off in style.

We were honoured that the Mayor of Barnet, Cllr Tony Vourou, as well as many other councillors and dignitaries, cut our birthday cake, along with Unitas Chairman Stuart Levy and Chief Executive Robin Moss, and led a rousing rendition of Happy Birthday!



UNITAS YOUTH ZONE RUNS FOUR FREE COMMUNITY OPEN DAYS A YEAR, WHEN THE DOORS OF THE YOUTH ZONE ARE THROWN OPEN AND EVERYONE IS WELCOME. OUR NEXT TWO OPEN DAYS WILL MARK **BLACK HISTORY MONTH** (SATURDAY 26 OCTOBER) AND **WINTER WONDERLAND** (SATURDAY 7 DECEMBER). WE WILL SEND OUT INFORMATION NEARER THE TIME. PLEASE BE IN TOUCH BEFOREHAND SO WE KNOW TO EXPECT YOU.

# REPRESENTING THE BOROUGH

Anyone who has been to visit Unitas will know we are blessed with an incredible basketball culture, especially among our Senior members. Through word of mouth, critical mass, some excellent coaching and of course the superb facility we operate from, literally hundreds of young ballers make their home at Unitas every year.

A testament to this is that our boys basketball team has represented the London Borough of Barnet at the London Youth Games for the past three years. Many other boroughs' teams are specific basketball clubs, but here in Barnet, Unitas is the best provision!

In May we took this year's team to the University of East London (a very early start on a Saturday morning for teenage boys...). Coached by our young person Richard Dos Santos (who you may recall was featured in our last Quarterly Update), the team won three and lost one of their matches. This was their



best result ever, and we finished second in our group, beating Hillingdon, Bexley and Barking and Dagenham. Our only loss came against Hounslow, who eventually took the silver medal.

The basketball boys had a lot to be proud of, and are already in training for the London Youth Games 2025!

## UNITAS - A LOCAL CHARITY

Unitas is Barnet's Youth Zone. We are proud members of the national OnSide Network of Youth Zones, but are also firmly grounded in and committed to our local community. We serve a diverse population of young people

and although we are open to any and all, our physical location means that we draw disproportionately from the areas surrounding our building, especially Burnt Oak, Colindale and Grahame Park.

 55%

OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE LIVE WITHIN ONE MILE OF THE YOUTH ZONE AND 68% WITHIN TWO MILES OF OUR BUILDING

 75%

OF OUR ACTIVE MEMBERS LIVE IN THE 50% OF MOST DEPRIVED POSTCODES NATIONALLY

 52%

OF OUR STAFF LIVE WITHIN ONE MILE OF THE YOUTH ZONE

 44%

OF MEMBERS ARE ON FREE SCHOOL MEALS (BARNET AVERAGE IS 21%)



# CELEBRATING SUCCESS

The Jack Petchey Achievement Award scheme, run by the Jack Petchey Foundation, allows schools, clubs and youth organisations to highlight and celebrate the achievements of young people age 11-25 across London and Essex.

Unitas has run the scheme since we opened, and is the largest awarding body in Barnet, annually giving out 27 awards to our members.



Each one is an inspiring story in itself - unlike so many awards that are primarily for attainment, the Jack Petchey Achievement Award is about recognising and celebrating achievement in the widest sense of the word, whether this be about learning a new skill, overcoming a particular challenge, leading within the peer group or being an outstanding team player.

On 2 July, the annual Barnet awards ceremony was held at ArtsDepot in Finchley, and 19 of our 27 winners and their families were there to collect their awards in person from the Deputy Mayor of Barnet, Cllr Danny Rich.

As each of their names was called out, the whole audience cheered and applauded them and we could not be more proud of what they have achieved.

The 2023/24 Jack Petchey Achievement Award winners from Unitas were:

**KAYDEN EVERTON-GREAVES**

**MAYA BUNDRYA**

**FERNANDO VITEZ**

**COLENA PADMORE-WOOD**

**ALI MOHAMMED**

**FELIX RAHMAN**

**STEFAN ALEXANDRU BEJAN**

**ZUZANNA POCALUN**

**YANN KNIGHT**

**AYSHA FAROOK**

**DEVONTE WELLER**

**RAMOY AMER**

**PETER VAN RENSBURG**

**JAHVON GEORGE**

**JOSH MAURICIO**

**HANMI WANG**

**DARIUS DUMITRU**

**PHOEBE DAVIES**

**COJOCARI OCTAVIAN**

**SAFA ALAM**

**RON BUKASA**

**ELLEN PONTES**

**ALEXANDRU NECSOIU**

**IANIS COJO**

**MELISSA NEAGU**

**MATILDA LEVENTHAL**

**ALESIA BUCIURA**

We will begin selecting 2024/25 winners in September.

# MEET OUR YOUTH WORKERS

THE TRUE HEROES OF WHAT WE DO HERE AT UNITAS ARE OUR YOUTH WORKERS. THEY ACT AS TRUSTED ADULTS, MENTORS AND ROLE-MODELS TO OUR YOUNG PEOPLE, DEVELOPING THEIR SKILLS, GROWING THEIR CONFIDENCE AND BUILDING THEIR RESILIENCE. TWO OF THE SENIOR YOUTH WORKERS IN OUR TEAM ARE TROY SHIM-HUE AND LOUISE ADU-POMAAH.

## PLEASE INTRODUCE YOURSELVES AND YOUR ROLES



**Louise:** I am the Junior Club Manager – I oversee all aspects of our work with 8-12 year olds (Juniors). I joined Unitas in October 2021.



**Troy:** I am the Senior Club Manager. I have the same role as Louise, but for the 13-19 year olds (Seniors). I've been at Unitas since September 2022.

## WHAT DID YOU DO BEFORE YOU CAME TO WORK AT UNITAS?



**Louise:** I was working at Waitrose after completing a dental nursing course.



**Troy:** I worked at a secondary school as a Behaviour Lead and I managed sports mentors.

## YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL THAT UNITAS IS A SECOND HOME

### WHAT MAKES UNITAS SPECIAL?



**Louise:** The young people who walk through the door, the volunteers who dedicate their time to support them, and the staff who go above and beyond to create beautiful and unforgettable moments and memories.



LOUISE



TROY



**Troy:** Young people feel that Unitas is a second home. We bring a sense of belonging and stability to their lives.

### WHY IS YOUTH WORK SO IMPORTANT?



**Louise:** It encourages young people to express themselves, explore their interests, provides them with a safe and supportive environment where they can develop essential life skills, build confidence, and form positive relationships.



**Troy:** I'd agree with that, and also youth work plays a crucial role in encouraging resilience, helping young people navigate challenges, build healthy relationships, and make informed decisions about their future.

### TELL US ABOUT A PARTICULAR YOUNG PERSON YOU HAVE REALLY SEEN GROW AND DEVELOP



**Louise:** When Ellie (age 9) started coming to Unitas, she had major separation issues. She would cry or even have a meltdown when mum left. Through really listening to her, giving her small tasks to do and easing her into a new friendship group, I've seen Ellie feel much more at ease. She's thriving now.



**Troy:** Oresti started coming to Unitas age 12. He's got additional needs and often communicates non-verbally. I've been working closely with him for more than two years, and now he remembers staff names, greets us and gets involved in the activities. It's great to see.

# EXCITING INSPIRATION THROUGH THE ARTS: OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH BURBERRY



WE ARE THRILLED TO SHARE THE SUCCESS OF A RECENT PROJECT MADE POSSIBLE BY THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF BURBERRY.

We have embarked on an exciting initiative that brought together young people in our community to explore their creativity and develop their own unique outfits in our Arts and Crafts space.

## A SERIES OF WORKSHOPS

With the funding provided by Burberry, we have been able to offer a series of workshops where our Junior members had the opportunity to design and create a variety of fashion items. These included personalised t-shirts with unique designs and artwork, customised tote bags with fabric paints, stencils and tie-dye, and hairclips, pins and jewellery crafted using polymer clay.

Building on the success of this programme, we will now be expanding the project to the other arts space. In the Media Room, young



people on our Senior sessions will have the opportunity to utilise their graphic design skills to create custom stickers and t-shirts. This project will allow them to delve into the world of digital art and bring their designs to life.

## PERFORMING ARTS

Meanwhile, in the Performing Arts studio, we are delighted to welcome back Alliance X Dance Stables, who will be teaching street dance. This promises to be a dynamic and energetic experience, helping our Junior participants to express themselves through movement and rhythm.



*If you know a company who might be interested in partnering with us to help offer even more opportunities to our young people, please do get in touch ([fundraising@unitasyouthzone.org](mailto:fundraising@unitasyouthzone.org)).*

# SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

## SPOTLIGHT ON OUR CADENT WARM HUB

# Cadent

## Your Gas Network

UNITAS' CORE PROVISION IS OUR EVENING, WEEKEND AND SCHOOL HOLIDAY SESSIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

But during the week in termtime, we don't just let our building stand empty. We host a wide variety of groups, events and initiatives that both bring income in for Unitas but also support community organisational locally.

One of the most exciting additions to our weekly schedule has been our Warm Hub, which has been running every Wednesday since just after the Easter holidays. It is a partnership with AgeUK, and is funded by Cadent, the UK's largest gas distribution network.



### CADENT ARE FUNDING THREE PROJECTS

Cadent are investing a substantial amount of financial support into the OnSide Youth Zones nationally, and here at Unitas they are funding three projects this year. The first is support for our community open days, the second is a programme in our training kitchen and the third is our Warm Hub.

You may have heard of Warm Hubs when the weather is colder - public buildings that allow those who cannot afford to heat their homes to come during the day somewhere safe, welcoming and of course heated.

Our Warm Hub offers all of this and during the spring and

summer, we say that it's the welcome that is particularly warm. Visitors are greeted by information about energy efficiency, carbon monoxide alarms, access to various services provided by the Council and by Cadent and, through the generous support of The Bread Factory, delicious bread and baked goods.



### ALWAYS PLENTY OF TEA AND COFFEE!

There are a range of activities over the course of the day for attendees, including talks, a walk around the park, boxercise, sessions in the gym, bingo and art activities. Warm soup is provided for free and there is always plenty of tea and coffee!

Every week the number of older local residents attending has been increasing as word has spread, and we are anticipating even more demand after the summer as the evenings draw in and the weather turns nippier.

*We are proud to be Powered by Cadent, and if you know someone who might benefit from our Warm Hub, tell them they can just drop by from 10am-2pm on a Wednesday outside school holidays.*





# COLENA'S STORY

AFTER BEING BORN IN GHANA AND SHUTTLING BACK AND FORWARD BETWEEN GHANA AND THE UK, MY FAMILY SETTLED NEAR WHERE UNITAS WOULD BE BUILT WHEN I WAS FIVE.

My childhood was often marked by boredom - there wasn't much to do around the area for young people, and school... well, school was school. I always loved reading, learning, sports and going to church, but didn't have a real outlet for my passions.

Playing in Montrose Park one day, I saw a new building being erected and took a leaflet that explained that a new youth centre was being built and would open soon. I was so excited about this - finally something for me and my friends I told my mum that I wanted to join, and became a member on the day that Unitas opened in June 2019.

## I FELT COMFORTABLE TO TALK

I started coming to Unitas when I was 11. I loved that it was so busy, had so many activities and that I could make so many new friends. The football pitch on the roof blew my mind! I also spent time on the climbing wall, building my strength and confidence. I wasn't always happy with how I looked, but didn't have anyone I felt comfortable to talk about this with.

The youth workers at Unitas, though, were different. They didn't judge me and they were so chill. They didn't lecture me or tell me what to do, but they

provide guidance, advice and are always in my corner. Talking of corners, I took up boxing at Unitas, and now that is a huge part of my life. It's given me focus and ambition - I want to train hard (and my coaches don't let me off the hook!) to be the best.

I'm also in better shape than I have ever been, and feel healthier and happier. I know who I am now, and what I want - I want to succeed at school and at boxing, and Unitas helps me with both.

## PROUD TO WEAR THE UNITAS ABC KIT

Recently we founded Unitas ABC, so I am a carded fighter - this means I go to other clubs and spar, and am being entered into shows to fight. I'm proud to wear the Unitas ABC kit. The coaches are my youth workers, and they are just amazing, especially Giacomo and Dean. I don't think they realise how big an impact they have on me. I'm so grateful to them.

Unitas feels like a community - my community. I go as much as I can. It's a place I can chill out, train hard and seek advice if I need it. I've got a lot more focus and I'm more ambitious because of Unitas. I've got a goal and I want to get to the top. Unitas has given me a FIRE to be great.



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