

July 2008

swimABILITY Festival 2008

Over fifty children with a range of disabilities enjoyed fun in the water at the 2008 swimABILITY Festival, held at The Neptune in Middlesbrough.

Now in its fourth year the annual event - organised by Tees Valley Sport and sponsored by the Amateur Swimming Association (asa) North East Region and npower active through the English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) - attracted a greater number of swimmers due to the inclusion of several different disciplines - giving more young people the chance to try a range of activities.

Six schools were represented by children aged 7-12; Holmwood and Grangetown (both Middlesbrough), Kirkleatham Hall (Redcar), Layfield (Yarm), Owton Manor (Hartlepool) and the Stephenson Centre (Darlington).

The day started with an aqua-aerobics warm up, followed by fun games and races to help the non-swimmers get used to the water and learn some basic skills. Instructors then taught rookie lifesaving skills to the more advanced swimmers – teaching about self survival techniques and how to perform rescues, before the University of Teesside Water Polo team introduced the swimmers to mini polo games and skills.

The festival was assisted by eight young volunteers, aged 14 – 18, from various Tees Valley swimming clubs. All are currently completing the asa Young Aquatic Organisers Award and thoroughly enjoyed helping design and plan the activities as part of their award.

Speaking at the event, Craig Nicholson, north east regional development officer for the asa, said; “the festival was extremely well set up and managed with all the children having a fantastic time and being able to take part in and learn about different disciplines. It was also pleasing to see a number of young volunteers supporting the event and it’s exciting for the region that great events like this are happening across the North East”.

For more information on swimming in the Tees Valley contact Jane Roche on 01642 342287 or at j.roche@tees.ac.uk.

Ends

Notes below

Photography Notes:

Photo 1 – group of children enjoying fun in the pool

Photo 2 - children celebrate scoring in game of mini-polo

Photo 3 – children, volunteers and organisers celebrate a great day

Editor's notes: Tees Valley Sport is a partnership initiative that aims to coordinate sports development, planning and delivery in the Tees Valley, working closely with coaches, participants, officials, administrators and providers. Their partners include the five local authorities – Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton on Tees as well as Sport England, the University of Teesside, national governing bodies of sport and sports coach UK.

Its key aims are:

- More coaches and better quality coaching
- More and easier access to sports
- More opportunities for people to join clubs
- Recognition and support for the work of coaches, officials and volunteers

www.teesvalleysport.co.uk