



SMASH mentor Mike Johnson and trustee Steve Sedgwick

Charity in call for votes to win cash

Mentoring group wants grant to aid youngsters

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A SWINDON charity that turned around a record number of young people's lives last year is seeking the public vote to make an even bigger difference in the future.

The SMASH mentoring scheme supported a record 171 people aged between nine and 19 in 2016 and has the aim of equalling or bettering the achievement this year.

The charity is hoping to land a grant of up to £25,000 from the Masonic Charitable Foundation, which has invited four Wiltshire groups to bid for a share of a £50,000 pot.

Founded in 1999, SMASH - Swindon Mentoring and Self-Help Youth Project - works with some of the town's most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people who may

have been excluded from school or have issues with self-harm or alcohol abuse.

They are matched with trusted adults in a safe environment away from the issues in their day-to-day lives, and can take part in sports and leisure activities.

Managing director Helen Fisher said: "We support young people who fall short of their potential, through circumstances not of their own making.

"We hope to break the cycle that may lead to social and personal problems brought on through poverty, mental illness, drug and alcohol dependency, bereavement,

abuse and poor relationships.

"When we speak to young people, they tell us that simply having someone outside of all of this, who can support, listen to them and help them overcome these problems, is of most importance.

"By meeting people outside of these situations, the young people don't have to live up to their label or perception."

The grants are being given from the foundation's Community Awards Tercentenary Fund to celebrate 300 years of the masonic charity.

Four charities in Wiltshire have been selected to bid for a share of

£50,000, with one grant of £4,000, one of £6,000, one of £15,000 and another of £25,000.

SMASH is in the running along with the Wiltshire Bobby Van, The John McNeill Opportunity Centre in Salisbury and Hope Nature Centre, in Southwick, near Trowbridge.

The charities with the most votes will receive the largest grants as part of the Masons' goodwill mission, which is making a total of £3m available nationally.

Helen said any of the grants would help but the largest amount would make a huge difference.

"The 171 children we helped last year all had positive experiences with us, which includes life-changing events such as going to university," she said.

"The top award would allow us more resources to support another 20 young people. Voting runs until July 31 at mcf.org.uk/vote.

FILM GUIDE

EMPIRE GREENBRIDGE

■ **(IMAX) Spider-Man: Homecoming** (12A)
 3D: 11:30, 14:30, 17:30, 20:30

■ **Spider-Man: Homecoming** (12A) 2D:
 10:30, 12:30, 13:30, 15:30, 16:30, 18:30, 19:30, 21:30

■ **Despicable Me 3** (U) 3D: 16:10, (20:40 Not

14:00, (17:10 Wed & Thurs), (20:10 Not Wed or Thurs) 2D: Sat & Sun: 14:00, 20:10

■ **All Eyez On Me** (15) Mon-Thurs: (11:20, 14:20 Not Wed or Thurs), (17:20 Tues), (20:20 Not Tues) Sat & Sun: 20:20

■ **Planet Of The Apes - Triple Bill** (12A)
 Tues: 17:00

■ **Oppenheimer Le Traviato Teatro**

13:40, 16:00, Sat, Sun: 11:20, 13:40, 16:00

■ **(3D) Spider-Man: Homecoming** (12A)
 Daily except Wed, Thurs: 11:50, 15:00, 18:10, 21:20, Wed, Thurs: 14:40, 17:40, 20:40

■ **(3D) War For The Planet Of The Apes** (12A) Tues: 20:00, Wed, Thurs: 11:00, 14:10, 17:20, 19:30, 20:30

■ **All Eyez On Me** (15) Sat, Sun, Mon: 19:30,

Sun -11:30 (S) 12:50 14:40 16:00 17:50 19:10
 21:00 Mon -11:30 12:50 14:40 16:00 17:50 19:10
 (S) 21:00 Tue -11:30 12:50 14:40 16:00 17:50 19:10
 21:00 Wed-Thu -11:00 13:00 14:00 16:00 17:00
 19:00 20:00

■ **Despicable Me 3** (U) (AD) Sat-Sun -12:45
 15:15 17:40 Mon-Tue -13:00 15:15 17:40 Wed-Thu
 -17:10