

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

Young entrepreneur TJ...

TJ Trueman is just one of the teenagers awarded for his positive contribution to society, at *The Kids Are Alright* launch event.

19 year old TJ, who lives in Stoke, is something of a young entrepreneur. He runs an independent record label, Vibe Productions, working with young people who love music and performing. At the time of our interview, he was planning a studio album mix with the youngsters, which he aims to sell in local record stores.

He also teaches street dance to people between the ages of 13 and 25, mixing ballet and modern, with break dance and hip hop, and performs as a DJ.

"There's lots of talent out there," said TJ, "and the way the younger people get involved in this project proves that they don't all just waste their time. Music is a great way for them to express their feelings, and it's fun for me too."

But life has not been a bed of roses for TJ. As a black Asian, originally from Thailand, he experienced some racial abuse when he was younger, usually in the form of 'mickety-taking' as he puts it.

TJ also struggled academically, and says that his GCSE results "weren't brilliant". It was only at the age of 17 that he was finally

diagnosed with dyslexia, which explained a lot of his difficulties with schoolwork. "Until then I thought I was thick, and people said so."

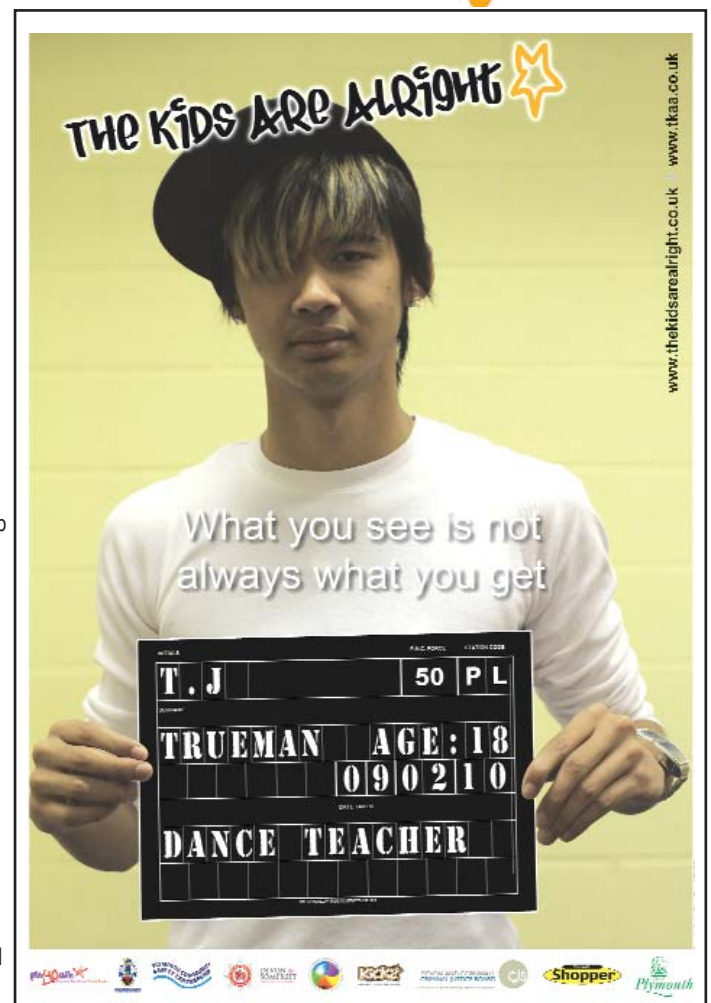
But he turned those negative experiences into something positive: "I thought I'd best do something for myself. The people who took the mickey out of me aren't going anywhere yet, but I am. I know a lot of kids get bullied at school. My advice is try to let it go and get on with your life."

TJ truly deserves his award, and is a good example of how young people every day are using their lives to contribute something good for their communities. He had a final word for his step-dad:

"My step-dad has been the best I could have. He taught me to wake up every morning and think 'If I don't do it, who will?'" That advice seems to have stood TJ in good stead.

You can find more positive stories about young people, post your opinions and take our survey, online at www.thekidsarealright.co.uk. And if you know of a young person or youth group doing great things in Plymouth, why not nominate them and get them the recognition they deserve?

If their story's picked as the best for that month, they'll win a £50



TJ (right) as he appears in the campaign 'wanted' posters and (left) pictured at the official launch of The Kids Are Alright initiative

For more information on The Kids Are Alright campaign, or to take the online survey and record your views of young people, visit www.tkaa.co.uk

Youth service goes on tour with 'Urbie'

Young people in Plymouth can now enjoy a new mobile drop-in centre following its official launch.

The 'Urbie' is a mobile meeting place where young people can hang out and use the facilities on offer, which include computers, a built-in PS3 games console and surround sound MP3 facility.

It also an awning and external lighting for outdoor facilities. A large screen TV fitted to the side of the Urbie can be watched by youngsters under the extended awning.

City youngsters were the first to get a 'sneak peek' at the hand-over of the Urbie, which has now begun touring parts of the city. The vehicle was officially handed over to Plymouth City Council's Youth Service at a special ceremony at the HQ Building in Union Street.

Experienced and qualified youth workers will be on hand to offer young people support, guidance and information on a range of issues through Urbie,

which has been designed to target areas of the city with little or no activities or facilities for young people in the evenings and on weekends.

The Urbie's patch will include Estover, Egguckland and Leigham to begin with and it will be available during mid-week evenings and weekends.

Among those present at the launch were senior youth officer Dave Haq, John Miller, head of integrated youth support

services, Carol Henwood, principal advisor neighbourhood and informal learning and Elaine Shotton, senior officer youth service and The Kids Are Alright co-ordinator.



Cambridge pilot paved the way for *The Kids Are Alright* in Plymouth

The Kids Are Alright campaign in Plymouth is modelled on a similar initiative which has run successfully in Cambridgeshire for the last year.

Launched in February 2009, *The Kids Are Alright* used surveys, posters, prizes, weekly newspaper coverage and events to deliver its message. The year-long project, championed by the *Cambridgeshire Times* and *Wisbech Standard*, challenged youth stereotypes by highlighting positive contributions young people made to society.

All of the stories demonstrated the courage, vibrancy, generosity and creativity of local youth. In July editor John Elworthy cited a rise in incidents where young people came forward to support community projects or assist strangers in need – a fact he largely credited *The Kids Are Alright* for. "It's almost as if the campaign has empowered young people to stand up and remind people of what they are about."

After the first year's awards ceremony, Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire, Julie Spence commented, "It is necessary to educate adults about young people and break down the barriers. I feel this campaign has done that."

Elaine Shotton, one of the organisers for *The Kids Are Alright* in Plymouth, said "It's really encouraging to see the impact that the campaign is having Cambridgeshire, and we're looking forward to seeing a similar effect in Plymouth as the year goes on."