

# Case Study: Inspiring YMCA residents to realise their potential

## YMCA resident:

Josh Dean, age 21 years

## Location:

YMCA Humber, Peaks Lane  
Grimsby, DN32 9ET

YMCA Humber’s ambitious plan to plant over 100 fruit trees and soft fruit bushes and plants in their Fruit-full Communities (FFC) funded orchard was realised in December 2016 with help from staff, community volunteers and many residents. One resident, Josh Dean, had grown up in a family passionate about horticulture and the environment, so this project provided a great opportunity for him to develop this further and encouraged him to enrol on a horticulture and landscape course at Grimsby College.

Enthusiastically taking part in the FFC project activities at Peaks Lane, Josh realised that *“The skills I’ve learned through this experience have been immeasurable. From working outside with peers sharing the same interests to meeting deadlines, paperwork and presentations, my overall confidence has undoubtedly grown”*.

This new found confidence in his abilities encouraged Josh to focus his attention on orchard maintenance and the practicality of



water provision to such a large orchard, especially in the summer months. As part of a team of residents, Josh was tasked with researching funding streams/opportunities for an irrigation system to ensure the survival of all the fruit trees and plants and asked to spearhead the investigation of a funded opportunity for the under 25s as a means to further his own personal development.

In the role of project lead for a solar powered, digital water irrigation system, Josh successfully pitched to the Think Big – The Environment Now panel and secured an astonishing £8,300 funding to develop a prototype and an app to monitor and control external variables such as moisture and light. This significant achievement

helped him to be nominated in the Young Volunteer of the Year category at the 2017 YMCA Youth Matters Awards.



Josh has also been a committed contributor to the FFC Young Peoples Panel, voicing his experience of the orchard project and the effect it has had on him and his fellow residents at Peaks Lane. Of the orchard space he says “*The psychological effect on residents at Peaks is plain to see. Having an area dedicated to them to manage offers a place away from the day to day problems. They have something to focus on and ultimately be proud of.*”

Josh feels that the team work aspect of planning, designing, planting and celebrating the orchard’s success has helped develop his personal social skills and confidence. He feels privileged to have worked with such hard working and dedicated people who have influenced his decision to complete the college course and ultimately aims for a career in landscape gardening. We wish him well!

### What makes Josh’s story special?

Josh had been encouraged by his grandfather to pursue an interest in plants and gardens but acknowledged that the Fruit-full orchard-growing project re-ignited his ambition to improve his employability prospects by gaining professional landscaping qualifications.

He rose to the team challenge of creating and planting a large orchard which undoubtedly required hard work, dedication and persistence. Not content with just acquiring labouring skills, Josh set about solving the problem of how to supply sufficient water to the newly planted trees. He enthusiastically stepped up to the plate in the role of project lead after helping to secure substantial development funding for an innovative solar powered irrigation system.

