

# Flat shoes, breeches and a jolly good tailor



Sport for Good!

## Annie Brewster JP

High Sheriff of Hertfordshire 2024-25

Flat shoes, breeches and a jolly good tailor have allowed greater participation than expected in my High Sheriff's theme.

Being passionate about the power of sport and physical activity as a cost-effective and successful vehicle for social change in areas such as crime and disorder reduction, health and mental wellbeing, social inclusion, community cohesion, educational attainment and the development of skills leading to employment and economic prosperity, I adopted 'Sport for Good' as the theme for my year in office.

I have been both delighted and astonished to find so many charities and organisations embedded within both our urban and rural communities, which improve lives by getting the county active. In response, I have teamed up with the Herts Sport & Physical Activity Partnership to thank the armies of volunteers who enable others to reach their goals and improve their lives.

My visits have taken me to all corners of the county. A highlight was an invitation to HM Prison The Mount, a Category C men's prison, to witness the 'Mount Olympics' during the Paris Games. The weightlifting was particularly impressive and I was moved by the camaraderie and encouragement to one another throughout the competition.

The 'Friday Night Project' was another uplifting initiative. External coaches attend a school in a challenging neighbourhood on a Friday evening to coach football, basketball and volleyball with over 120 pupils attending. It is the only three hours on the police's weekly 'Tartan Rug Dashboard' that is green, demonstrating no reported antisocial behaviour is taking place.

I was amazed when sitting with Her Honour Judge Lana Wood, Resident Judge at St Albans Crown Court, as she reviewed the progress of offenders on the court's 'Choices and Consequences' project. This is an inspired collaboration between the courts, police and probation service.

One offender after the other referred to

organised physical activities such as tennis, fishing or boxing that the charity HACRO (Hertfordshire Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders) delivers as making the biggest difference in reducing their drink and drug habit and preventing their reoffending. It is equally evident that carpentry and walking football offered by the brilliant homelessness charity Emmaus are also changing lives.

In the next few months the project hopes to embark on a scheme with probation to train ex-offenders to oversee 1-2-1 gym sessions in the community, targeted at those struggling with harmful addictions to encourage them to follow a different path.

Improvements in mental wellbeing have been clearly showcased in all the Hertfordshire Health Walks I have attended – various guided walks of different lengths led by wonderful volunteers. I have loved hearing the volunteers' back stories and what has brought them to the walks – often injury or loss of a partner – and how much better they are navigating life now.

My High Sheriff's 'Making a Difference' and 'Lifetime Achievement' awards have been presented to many of our county's unsung heroes together with 'Contribution to Parkrun' Awards to many of the volunteer marshals who turn out in all weathers. I have thoroughly enjoyed visiting all 34 Hertfordshire junior and senior parkrun events and meeting thousands of Hertfordshire residents who benefit from them.

I've also witnessed sport and physical activity being used effectively in domestic abuse victim recovery, neurodiversity programmes, young people excluded from school and much more. I feel most fortunate to have this unique experience in my shrieval year and I cannot wait to see what further delights I discover and support in the second half of my year.



With participants in the HM Prison The Mount Olympics



At my High Sheriff of Hertfordshire's 'Sport for Good' Awards for parkrun volunteers