

Vickie Simmonds, co-founder of Winchester based dance charity wins national award

January 2021 - Vickie Simmonds, co-founder of Winchester based wheelchair dance group, Liberate Dance has been awarded the Rising Star Award from One Dance UK.

The One Dance UK Awards are an annual celebration to champion, acknowledge and reward the people who have made the most impact on the vibrant dance landscape across the UK - something that Vickie embodies.

The Rising Star award celebrates someone who is at the start of their career who is already making a significant positive difference in their area of work. Vickie won the Rising Star Award thanks to her tireless work setting up and running Liberate Dance - a charity dance group which makes dance accessible for wheelchair users, celebrating the freedom and movement a wheelchair brings to people with physical disabilities.

Liberate Dance, started by Vickie Simmonds and Amanda Watkinson, was inspired by Vickie's drive to use her wheelchair as a celebration of movement rather than an obstacle. For Vickie, Liberate Dance is all about connecting a community of people and breaking down barriers and stigmas through dance.

Amanda Watkinson, Project Manager, Move Momentum said: *"This award is so well deserved and is a true testament to all the hard work Vickie has put in to make Liberate Dance a reality. Vickie has inspired so many wheelchair users across the country and beyond, and continues to do so. Here's to many more awards, and a lot more dance! We're so proud of you Vickie!"*

Vickie Simmonds, Co-founder of Liberate Dance said: *"Thank you so much for this award, it means the whole world to me and I can't thank my Liberate Dance and Move Momentum family enough for surprising me with the nomination. Because of all of our dancers and supporters, Liberate Dance isn't just a dream in my head but a reality for everyone involved. Thank you for being part of this movement where we can all grow, learn and encourage each other - this award is for you all"*

Instead of sitting on their laurels when the UK entered into lockdown, Vickie and Amanda decided to take their wheelchair user exclusive classes online to reach their regular participants as well as anyone else who would like to tune in to stay active during isolation. They achieved fantastic success, reaching people across the country and beyond, with dancers tuning in from Norway and the USA.

The charity works hard to keep those at higher risk of isolation active and part of a community during these socially isolating times.

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Notes to editors

About Move Momentum

Move Momentum is a local dance charity based in Winchester, founded in 2016 by Louise Todino and started with their Academies. In 2018, Amanda Watkinson took on the role of Project Manager for Move Momentum, overseeing all the projects and developing the charity. Since then the charity has expanded to deliver classes for over 65's as part of their GEMS project and then most recently developed Liberate Dance, an exclusively wheelchair-based dance company, alongside Vickie Simmonds, a GB Para Hockey player.

Move Momentum provides dance classes that are accessible, inclusive and affordable for everyone. We support individuals' mental and physical well-being and focus on enriching their quality of life by creating accessible opportunities, encouraging self-expression and supporting individuality.

About Liberate Dance

Liberate Dance was set up through Move Momentum by best friends Amanda and Vickie Simmonds, a GB Para Hockey player. It is the only dance company in the UK exclusively for wheelchair users.

More information can be found on our website <https://www.movemomentum.co.uk/>