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HOVE CHARITY FOUNDER AWARDED BY PM

A former punk rocker from Hove who set up a charity to help people who rely on assisted support for learning difficulties or autism enjoy live music by being matched with a volunteer 'Gig Buddy' has today, 27 May, received Prime Minister Boris Johnson's daily Points of Light award.

Paul Richards was a founding member of a punk rock band which was mainly made up of musicians with learning difficulties, and noticed how people in the crowd at gigs who had learning difficulties would often need to leave early due to carers finishing shifts by 10pm. The experience inspired Paul to set up charity 'Stay Up Late' and run a befriending project that could allow people with learning difficulties to stay out late and fully enjoy gigs, concerts, club nights and other cultural events by matching them with a volunteer who could serve as a 'Gig Buddy'. The matching process works by connecting a disabled user with a vetted volunteer who has shared interests and passions, and agree to attend an event together once a month. Starting off in Sussex, the initiative now operates in 12 cities across the UK, and in 2021 Stay Up Late also launched a new project, 'Sports Buddies', to pair up people with and without learning disabilities to undertake regular exercise together.

Congratulating Paul on his award, Peter Kyle, MP for Hove, said:

"This Award is a brilliant recognition of Paul's work. These things take hard work and dedication and don't happen by accident – well done Paul, and thank you on behalf of everyone in Sussex who is benefiting from this genuinely amazing idea."

Paul said:

"It's wonderful to receive this recognition, especially in the 10th year of our charity 'Stay Up Late'. Of course, the real heroes are our volunteers and the wonderful staff team who make all our work possible. Thank you."

Paul is the 1925th person to receive the Prime Minister's UK daily Points of Light award, which was first launched in April 2014 to recognise outstanding individuals making a difference where they live. Each day, someone, somewhere in the country is selected to receive the award to celebrate their remarkable achievements, including hundreds of volunteers who have been recognised for how they have served their communities through the Coronavirus pandemic.

Notes to Editors

1. The Points of Light awards recognise outstanding individual volunteers, people who are making a change in their community and inspiring others.

2. The Prime Minister makes daily announcements of the winners to celebrate, encourage and promote volunteering and the value that it brings to the country.
3. If people know someone who could be a Point of Light they should write to the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street.
4. Website: www.pointsoflight.gov.uk