

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

Harrison's deserved award

A 21-year-old student from Plymouth who has raised thousands of pounds to help deprived children in South Africa is the winner of The Kids Are Alright Young Person of the Month Award for April.

Harrison Nash, who lives in Mannamead, wins £50 worth of vouchers as the monthly award winner.

His charity work started when he went on a gap year visit to South Africa in 2007, taking advantage of the opportunity to work at a school and children's home in Port Elizabeth.

What he experienced so moved him that he has dedicated much of his life since – in between studies – either working as a volunteer in South Africa or raising money for the Protea Primary School and the Maranatha Children's Home.

Harrison has already raised £6,000 to help the youngsters in Port Elizabeth and last year went through the exhaustive process of setting up a registered charity in the UK to boost his fund-raising efforts.

The charity is called Maranatha Care Children and Harrison has set up a website to promote the work in South Africa and to encourage financial support from individuals and organisations in the UK and elsewhere in the world.

Harrison, who is in the second year of a social work degree at Plymouth University, attended Devonport High School for Boys. "I went to Port

Elizabeth for my gap year project and have been back five times since," he said.

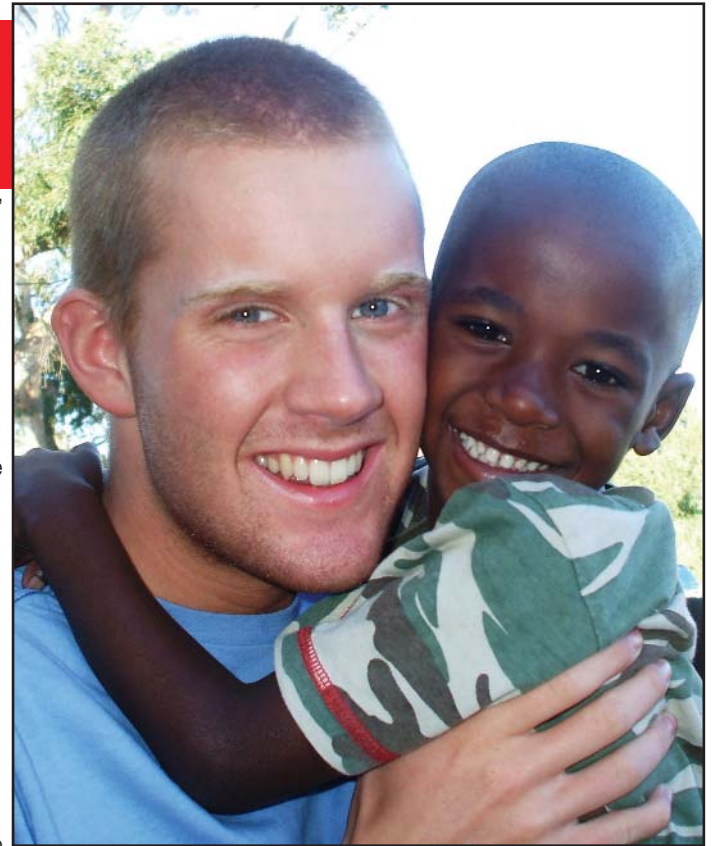
Harrison spent his Easter break from university in Port Elizabeth, personally funding the trip, as he has done for all his visits. While there, he took 15 youngsters to an Elton John concert and will also be taking two older boys to see one of England's World Cup games in June and will then spend the summer months in South Africa as well.

"All the money we raise goes to the work of the school and children's home in Port Elizabeth," he added. "The money we have raised has already helped in so many ways and has made a huge difference to the lives of these youngsters."

His aim this year is to raise £20,000 and he is already well on the way, having raised £5,000 in the first couple of months of the year. "I have been overwhelmed with the support I have already received," he said. "It's amazing how much support people are prepared to give. Now that we have launched the website people can donate online, which will be an important way of raising funds going forward," he said.

Harrison explained that the ethos of the primary school and children's home is to provide a future for children who have come from an extremely abused or deprived background. The school is called a 'safe place' for youngsters who have no family or have been removed from their families because of neglect or abuse.

"Our aim is not only to provide a suitable home environment, but also to



Harrison Nash (above) with one of the youngsters from the Maranatha school and (left) with youngsters who have been able to join a local scout group thanks to the money raised by Harrison

safeguard the futures of those in care," he said. "All children are entitled to grow up in a safe, healthy and nurturing environment. But at Maranatha Care Children we also want to empower children and young people to fulfill their potential.

"We want to safeguard the future of young people in care coming to the end of their secondary schooling. It is about opening doors in allowing education and training to continue, and empowering care leavers to lead healthy and fulfilling independent lifestyles that do not put them back in an environment where they find themselves at risk of the very factors that forced them to flee in the first place."

Harrison wants to use funds raised by the charity to help towards the cost of providing long term education and job opportunities for the youngsters.

"We want to offer these children the support they need; giving each child the individual attention and love they have not received. We want to open the doors for private education and additional therapy, where these children will see their potential realised. However with a lack of financial support such visions become hard to achieve.

"Our central ethos is long term involvement and looking at empowering and protecting the children and young people through to adulthood and their integration into society and independence," he added.

For more information or to make a donation visit www.maranathacarechildren.com

Get on course with summer mix

Summer Mix is a new programme of positive activities and opportunities for young people.

Running from August 2 to August 27, 76 different courses will be offered with up to 2,364 places available on a first come first served basis.

Courses cover topics in Arts and Fashion; Skills for Life; Business and Career; Digital Media and Film; Music and Performance; Sports, Fitness & Wellbeing. The courses are being coordinated by Plymouth City Council, Extended School Services and Careers South West (Connexions).

All courses are free to people between the ages of 11-19 (or up to 25 with special needs).

Elaine Shotton, of Plymouth City Council's Youth Service, said, "These courses are a great resource, giving young people a 'taster' in their chosen field to help with their decision making about their working life and the opportunity to

have fun. This is just one more way in which young people can help themselves to contribute positively in life."

Upon completion, students will receive a certificate which will demonstrate what they have achieved on summer mix. This could help towards their future career.

One course likely to be filled up quite quickly is the Driving Theory Test course, at the end of

which those young people who already have a provisional driving licence will be able to take the theory test free of charge.

Full details of all courses, and an online application form, will be available on the Summer Mix website, launching in early-mid June, www.summERMix.co.uk.

A brochure will also be distributed through schools, Youth Centres, Connexions and from course providers.



Interested in voluntary work this summer?

If you're aged 16-25, and you're looking for voluntary work with the chance of a qualification this summer, you could be one of our Peer Volunteers, working with the Youth Service on the Summer Mix programme. Peer Volunteers are the first people that students meet when they come onto the Summer Mix programme. You will be trained in First Aid, Teamwork and much more, and you will also receive an Open College Network qualification in Peer Volunteering. To find out more contact Laura Chaffe on 01752 306596, or laura.chaffe@plymouth.gov.uk

For more information on The Kids Are Alright campaign, or to nominate a young person for a kids are alright award please visit

www.tkaa.co.uk

