

LEICESTERSHIRE TABLE TENNIS <https://www.topspin-ldttl.co.uk/>

One of the most heartening scenes I have witnessed recently in the local table tennis community was when I went to have a look at the Special Olympics group organized by David Morley at Knighton Park, something he has been doing for the past 12 years.

It all started in 1946 when the Joseph P Kennedy Foundation was established to research into intellectual disability. His daughter and J F Kennedy's sister, Eunice Kennedy Schriver, took over as Director in 1957 and created Camp Schriver especially for such disabilities which was an instant success. World wide it grew from there with the first International Special Olympic Games at Soldiers Field, Chicago in 1968.

The organization grew and grew throughout the world, coming to Britain in 1978. As time passed more and more activities and sports were encompassed and it has been an essential tool for the wellbeing of many individuals.

In 2009 a Special Olympic Games were being staged in Leicester and Mike Smith, himself very busy on all table tennis fronts, asked David Morley if he would like to help with the organization of the table tennis section – David accepted without hesitation, thus launched a dedicated service to the cause.

In 2011 David set up his Special Olympic group at the Knighton Park club including two of the group who were two who took part two years earlier, David Ludlow and Peter Hirniak, who are still very much a vital part, seeing the group grow and thrive.

The major aspect behind the whole thing, and the local group certainly encompasses this, is fun and friendship. These vulnerable people are very often isolated and bullied by their peers and desperately need support and encouragement which they get in the way the group works.

David's group includes all those affected from birth but they do have the support of their families which is essential. But just as many do not have this support and it is even more important to encompass those.

David Morley is also heavily involved in the Multi-Sports section of the association at the Aylestone Sports Centre which encourages a large cross section of activities and it is very heartening to see so many such people thoroughly enjoying themselves

One of the biggest events in Britain, indeed the world, was the 50th Anniversary Games in 2018, held in Stirling, Scotland when thousands attended.

An intellectual disability from birth is not something that should be discriminated against, yet it so often is, and these dedicated people who spend so much time trying to add some normality and enjoyment in this way need all the help they can get – David Morley certainly deserves recognition.

John Bowness.