



**Date**  
**NEWS RELEASE**

**Zibrant and clients host Muscular Dystrophy sufferers for Paralympic 'Muscle Dreams' experience**

Eleven families with children suffering from Muscular Dystrophy joined staff and clients of the Zibrant events agency for a 'Muscle Dreams' experience at the Paralympics last week, as part of an initiative organised by the Muscle Help Foundation. The charity helps organise once-in-a-lifetime experiences for children and young people with muscle-wasting disease Muscular Dystrophy, for which there is no known cure.

The group included children between eight and 19 years old, all of whom use power chairs, who applied for a place to attend the Paralympics. They were looked after on the day by 'Muscle Warriors' Zibrant managing director – sales and marketing Fay Sharpe and senior conference consultant Seb Bown, plus three of the agency's clients who volunteered to take part: Joanna Lawlor of AstraZeneca; Gill Wise of Diageo; and Bingül Akaroğlu of Clifford Chance.

The volunteers were chosen on the basis of written 'entries' saying why they would like to be involved, with examples below.

Joanna Lawlor wrote, 'What a great opportunity to help be a part of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and experience for these youngsters! I used to work on residential P.H.A.B holidays for young people who had a range of disabilities and I found it one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I'm used to working under pressure and to thinking on my feet, and whilst a fun experience, there's no doubt that acting as host in a 'venue' as massive as the Olympic Park will be busy and demanding! If I can be there to help someone have a day they will never forget, then I will go home happy. And, I have a sneaky suspicion, that person will inspire me more than they will ever know.'

Gill Wise wrote, 'I would love to volunteer. My cousin is disabled and when my aunt adopted her, at the age of 14 (the same age as me) she was bed bound and very withdrawn. We strengthened her muscles and were able to remove her callipers, teaching her to walk, ride a bike and roller skate - two things more than I can do!! We were able to transform her life and she is now happily married. She is the most kind and jolly person I know – I will never forget when she said 'why do people look at me funny – there is nothing wrong with me!' My nephew also has learning disabilities and sport has transformed him – attaining a black belt in Tae Kwondo.'

Bingül Akaroğlu wrote, 'I volunteer at a children's charity and have an aspiration to assist as many children's charities as possible. As a mother of two children, organised and patient, I would like to give these children a great experience.'

Included in the schedule was a 'Musclympics' welcome party on Thursday and a full day at the Olympic Park with seats at the Paralympic Athletics and 7-a-side wheelchair football on Friday 7 September.

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Says Fay Sharpe, 'This was a truly humbling as well as uplifting experience, and I hope that the children and their families have a memory to treasure. The Muscle Help Foundation is a small specialist charity run by husband and wife team Michael and Sue McGrath, and it was simply incredible to be part of the 'Muscle Dreams' initiative. These young people are some of the bravest and loveliest children I have ever met, and it was an amazing privilege to spend time with them. They saw some amazing Paralympic sporting spirit, enjoyed the Coca Cola Beat Box, and had photos taken with the Olympic torch. Personally, I have made some amazing and inspiring new friends with whom I will stay in touch and who really put life's challenges into perspective.'

Additionally, it filled me with pride to see how well the organisers of London 2012 were prepared for disabled visitors – the logistics were seamless and enabled our wheelchair users to manoeuvre without difficulty.'

#### **Ends**

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#### **Notes to editors:**

Zibrant is a leading provider of venue-finding, event production, event and incentive management and hotel booking services. With its origins dating from 1988, the award-winning agency now places over 25,000 events annually in more than 50 countries and employs 200 staff predominantly in the UK, Ireland and France with strategically placed global representatives. Zibrant operates independently as part of Motivcom plc, an AIM listed UK business services group offering marketing communications, event management and incentive expertise to corporate clients. [www.zibrant.com](http://www.zibrant.com)