

YWAM's 2012 Games Outreach Gets Underway

A two year UK-wide outreach program focusing on the build-up to and the aftermath of the Olympic Games in 2012 has begun under the banner: Forever.

In the past, the Olympic Games have been a great platform for outreach, where athletes and fans from every nation gather in one place.

"There is no event on the planet that offers such an opportunity to reach people from so many nations," says Yan Nicholls who is heading up the Forever team. The Olympic Games provides a host of opportunities for YWAM schools, teams and ministries from across the world to come to the UK to do outreach.

And the essence of Forever is that the work of the teams visiting the UK over this next two years will have a lasting effect.

"God has spoken to YWAM about this Olympic outreach about leaving a legacy," continues Yan, "to deposit something in the communities we're working in that has an impact long after the games have finished." Activities will be launched and co-ordinated at YWAM's training centre in Harpenden, England.

Though the Olympic Games don't get started until 2012, the Forever team sees this as an opportunity to have a season of outreach built around the theme of the Olympics, but starting now.

There will be lots of activities in the UK around this time, and Yan is keen for their activities not to be exclusive.

"We're partnering with churches and other Christian

organisations to reach out with love to the people of the UK," Yan says. "Ideally, this will mean working with communities for much of the two years, doing a series of outreaches with them, and really investing in our relationships them."

The vision for the Olympic outreach is to establish new long term outreach work in certain locations in all seven cities hosting Olympic events (Cardiff, Coventry, Glasgow, London, Manchester, Newcastle, and Weymouth).

Yan continues: "Looking back to the Munich Olympics in 1972, not only was that the first YWAM Olympic outreach, but also nearly 40 years on we can still see its legacy in terms of planting YWAM teams. YWAM Norway was born out of the Munich Games, as was one of the YWAM centres in Germany.

"As well as our focus on sports, we are also seeking to create teams based around social justice, children and youth, and the Arts," Yan says. "How it will pan out we don't know. We might end up with a sports team in Manchester, or with a sports team in a non-Olympic city such as Bristol, or a team working with refugees in Manchester. We're YWAM, so we're open to any ideas and visions that people bring."

The Forever team has already built strong links with contacts in several Olympic hosting cities. The themed teams are also in preparation, with team leaders in place and plans being made to move into the cities.