

NORTH CLUBS PUT SHIRTS ON THE WORLD CUP KIDS

By chief reporter COREENA FORD

● coreena.ford@ncjmedia.co.uk
Telephone: 0191-201 6331

A YOUTH soccer team has launched a mercy mission to take thousands of football kits to children in South Africa.

John Brunton – one of four trustees at North Shields Juniors' AFC – has just returned from Cape Town, where he handed out more than 120 kilos of sports equipment.

But the scenes which greeted him and his wife in two poverty-stricken townships profoundly affected them, prompting them to embark on an even bigger drive to bring some happiness to the football-mad youngsters.

John, 55, of North Shields, North Tyneside, said: "These children have nothing at all – no water or electricity, let alone shirts and boots – so they were very appreciative, and kept asking if we would be bringing more."

"So I've spoken to the four other trustees at the club and we've agreed to put out a call to every club in Northumberland and North Tyneside Football Association, asking all of them to donate unwanted kit, and we'll be making another trip out to South Africa next year."

The couple journeyed to the African country for a family wedding in Cape Town, but they took two days out from their trip to deliver several sack-loads of sporting goodies to children in the townships of Gugulethu and Khayelitsha.

John, a roofer, said: "Every year at the club we always have lots of unwanted kit because new strips are brought in and children outgrow their kit."

"Over the last few years we have sent stuff to Iran, Iraq, Bosnia and Uganda, but we're never sure if it actually gets to where we want it to go."

"When my wife June and I found out we were going to South Africa for my cousin's wedding, we thought we'd take any kit we collected this year over ourselves, and actually hand deliver it."

"I got in touch with a charity in South Africa called Anduela Sports Company, and they arranged to meet us and take us to the townships."

"When we went through Immigration with all of the sacks, a customs officer came over and said we were doing a really good thing because helping children to play football keeps them away from committing crimes."

John and June went to their family event



FOOTBALL FOCUS: John Brunton who is collected strips to donate to youngsters in South Africa.

and visited many tourist attractions before spending two days journeying to Gugulethu and Khayelitsha with workers from Anduela.

He said: "It was a real eye-opener... they looked like scrapyards. It was very, very distressing."

"The people there need to be helped. I couldn't believe the level of poverty. Around 70% of people in the townships we visited had no electricity and were living in tin shacks with no toilets."

"Yet everyone we bumped into seemed really happy, polite and smiling."

"The government is working on it, but it is just tackling the poverty that people will see when they arrive next year for the World Cup."

"Tin shacks on the very edges of townships, close to roads where tourists can see them, are being replaced with buildings

made from breeze blocks, so people can't see the rest of the shacks."

John plans to spend three days in South Africa next year, personally delivering shirts, boots, tracksuits and other sports equipment the region's Football Association donates.

He said: "It has really bothered us ever since we got back. So, next year, we want to be able to fill a whole shipping container to ship out and I'll spend a day in each of three townships handing it out."

"I don't know how much sports kit we'll need. It must be thousands of shirts, but if every club responds in the way North Shields Juniors did and they amassed 120 kilos of secondhand kit on their own – we should manage it. After all, it's kit that otherwise goes to waste."

To find out more visit www.northshield-juniorsafc.co.uk



STRIPPED FOR ACTION: youngsters proudly show off some of their shirts.

Football strips raise thousands of pounds

By COREENA FORD

● coreena.ford@ncjmedia.co.uk
Telephone: 0191-201 6331

SHIRTS signed by sporting stars helped to raise £12,000 for a children's hospital in West Africa.

A Black Cats top – signed by striker Darren Bent, manager Steve Bruce and the Wearside's first team and a signed Newcastle Falcons top were among 20 items that went under the hammer at a special event to mark local company RTC North's 20th anniversary.

The Sunderland-based firm, which develops products, in-

vised 300 business people to join them at their birthday bash at Ramside Hall Hotel in Durham last week, where they put all the cash raised towards Freetown Children's Hospital in Sierra Leone, the company's chosen charity.

The charity dinner last Tuesday raised £12,000 in all – half of which was made through

the auction – and the company had already raised £13,000 before hosting the night.

This means they are already halfway towards their eventual £50,000 target.

With an annual budget of only £150,000, the hospital cares for some of the world's most needy children and the money will provide a much needed boost.

Having recently emerged from 10 years of civil war, one in four of its children die before their fifth birthday.

Freetown Children's Hospital manager, Mr Kanu, said:

"We are very grateful for the support and kindness offered by RTC North as it will make a huge difference to the hospital."

"There are many improvements that are needed just to provide the most basic treatment for our children and the staff are very excited by the fundraising efforts in England."

To donate direct visit www.welbodipartnership.org

