**Academy@Leyland forges link with India to promote community health.**

When Principal Mohsin Khan and his wife Halima from Baskhari, Uttar Pradesh in India visited Leyland for the first time they already felt that they had a link with the town as the name was so familiar to them from the trade mark carried on the bonnets of many of the vehicles on the roads at home. They were then surprised to find another connection to home when, talking to their Aunt, Sarifa Kabir, they discovered that Leyland had borrowed an Indian word ‘Mela’, as the title for its annual health festival. This is organised by The Rotary Club of Leyland and the Preston based National Forum for Health and Wellbeing, and held in the town each September. Mohsin visited both the Leyland and Preston Health Melas. Very impressed with the work he saw there he felt this concept could be taken back to India.

Mela is a Sanskrit word describing a fair or gathering involving education, entertainment refreshment, information exchange and general socialising. The Leyland Health Mela uses this format to deliver a vibrant celebration promoting community health and wellbeing. A key feature is the opportunity provided for members of the community to have a comprehensive health check in a non-threatening atmosphere.

Realising that this type of programme might provide an opportunity for his school to play a significant role in promoting the health of his own community in India, Mohsin was excited to find that a local secondary school, Academy@Worden, had already agreed to host the 2015 Leyland Health Mela. It was now working on a comprehensive programme to involve its students in all aspects of the event.

NFHW and Leyland Rotary Club member Ken Ainscough who liaises with the school, quickly arranged a meeting at the Academy between Mohsin and Chris Catherall, Headteacher, to discuss possible collaboration and it soon emerged that the two schools had much in common. Using the Health Mela as a theme the two schools now plan to exchange ideas and experiences and, who knows in the future, even staff and students. Their aim is to use the connection to give a truly international dimension to the curriculum.

Speaking after meeting at the school, Mohsin Khan said,

*‘It will be great to take the idea of the Health Mela back with me to India and to be able to do this in collaboration with Academy@Worden. Our two countries have exchanged ideas and experiences for centuries so this is a real continuation of a very long tradition.*

*We also intend to develop our relationship with local representatives of Rotary International’*

Chris Catherall added,

 *‘There are so many areas in which our two schools could collaborate. Apart from the Health Mela and general curriculum we have explored our mutual interests in chess, basket-ball and cheer-leading and other areas. There really is no limit to the possibilities.’*

Romesh Gupta, Chair of the National Forum for Health and Wellbeing commented,

*‘This is an exciting opportunity to give an international dimension to the activities of our organisations. It is amazing to see the energy released when ideas such as these are explored across cultures and continents.’*

Speaking for the Rotary Club of Leyland, President Tony Harrison noted,

*‘For some time we have, as a club, been actively promoting our connections with the schools in Leyland. This initiative is an exciting example of what can be achieved. It is exactly the sort of development we were hoping for.’*