



# Opportunities

## The Newsletter from the Forest of Dean Children's Opportunity Centre

Volume 1

Issue 15

Summer 2011

Charity No: 284975

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It's the end of another school year already! It's been a very busy term for the Centre with a lot of changes and new challenges, all packed into this edition of *Opportunities*. If you have anything you would like to put into the next edition please contact me using the details on page 4.

*LOUISA*

### End of Term Goodbyes!

It was with great sadness that we said goodbye to Carol Turley and Wendy Marshall, who left us at the end of the Summer Term. Although Carol and Wendy were employed by the Children's Centre and not the Opportunity Centre, we all worked very closely together to ensure that between us we offered high quality sessions for pre-school children with or without a disability within the Forest of Dean.



We held a surprise party for Wendy and Carol alongside the pre-school leavers party on the 21<sup>st</sup> July, where they were presented with presents from staff and parents, a few tears were shed as people said their goodbyes.

As Carol starts her early retirement, we all wish her the very best and expect she will be spending many hours doing her favourite pastime - walking. We are all very envious. Wendy will be spending some



valuable time with her family and we are hoping to see her again soon, when she has promised to come back and do some voluntary work for the charity.

From everybody at the Opportunity Centre we wish them both lots of luck for the future and would like to say a very big thank you for all their hard work and dedication during their time with us at the Centre.

### Recipe Section - Lemon Drizzle Cake

#### Ingredients

225g unsalted butter, softened

225g caster sugar

4 eggs

Finely grated zest 1 lemon

225g self-raising flour

#### For the Drizzle Topping

Juice of 1 ½ lemons

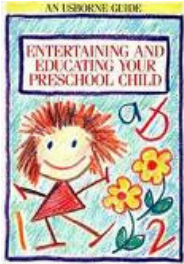
85g caster sugar



1. Heat oven to 180C/fan 160C/gas 4.
2. Beat together the butter and sugar until pale and creamy, then add the eggs, one at a time, slowly mixing through. Sift in the flour, then add the lemon zest and mix until well combined.
3. Line a loaf tin (8 x 21cm) with greaseproof paper, then spoon in the mixture and level the top with a spoon.
4. Bake for 45-50 mins until a thin skewer inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean. While the cake is cooling in its tin, mix together the lemon juice and sugar to make the drizzle. Prick the warm cake all over with a skewer or fork, then pour over the drizzle - the juice will sink in and the sugar will form a lovely, crisp topping.

## Book Review

Opportunities will be featuring books from the Book Library. All books are owned by the Centre and are available to borrow for **free**. Please ask at reception for more information or drop in and take a look at the wide range of books available.



### Entertaining and Educating your Preschool Child Robyn Gee and Susan Meredith

With the summer holidays underway this book could come in very handy. Packed with hundreds of ideas to educate and entertain – from craft activities and music and rhymes to ideas for outings and tips to make a journey more enjoyable. Most of the activities are cheap (or free!) and take very little planning – ideal for rainy days!

Between them, authors Robyn Gee and Susan Meredith have written over 40 books with an educational focus aimed at younger children; their years of experience show in this book which was first published in 1987.

## GSK Take On Britain's Biggest Mountains

On Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June, a group of brave volunteers from Glaxo SmithKline set off to take part in a gruelling 24 hour challenge taking on Britain's three Highest Mountains and raise money for the Centre.

The team completed the challenge - ascended and descended Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon in their 3 different countries - in 23 hours 14 minutes and 2 seconds. Sponsorship money is still being collected but the current total looks to be well over £3,500.

As the Centre is reliant on grants, donations and fundraising to sustain its services we are thrilled at what the team have achieved so many thanks and congratulations to Dave, Lisa, Jamie, Gary, Sarah, Ladi and Hannah and their support team for undertaking this mammoth task and to their colleague John Shaw who nominated the Centre as their chosen charity.

You can read the team's daily updates from the challenge at our website, [www.childoc.org.uk](http://www.childoc.org.uk)



Some of the team at the summit of Scafell Pike

## Ofsted Success

Staff, volunteers and parents at the Centre recently celebrated our Ofsted result which took place during the Easter Break. The inspection not only examined our highly successful Holiday Playscheme – as had previously been the case – but the whole of the Early Years Provision. The Centre received an overall rating of good with many outstanding features highlighted.

The report particularly praises the “very good progress” made by children in the setting and the “warm and friendly atmosphere where children feel cared for and valued.” Centre Manager, Marilyn Smith, and the Trustees were praised for their “confident management” in supporting well qualified and skilled “teams of staff who are highly motivated, enthusiastic and keen to develop what they offer.” The “exceptional” partnerships with parents, carers and other professionals were also praised.

The Early Years Sessions and Playschemes offered by the Centre are fully integrated with about 50% of the children having a special need or disability. The Centre also works closely with other early years providers to share their expertise in supporting children with a variety of needs. Ofsted judged the links and work with outside agencies and other early years professionals as “outstanding” and the high value the Centre places on “equality and diversity for children and their families, staff and volunteers” was also commented on.

The full report can be found on the Ofsted website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

## In Memory

It is with great sadness that we have to report the sad loss of Margaret Ford, who died on the 12<sup>th</sup> June. Margaret was the mother of our trustee of 20 years, Helen Baker and was also the much loved grandmother of Helen's sons Jack and Harry.

Margaret was always involved in our fundraising activities making lots of her delicious cakes and became well known amongst our regular supporters, many asking us “which are the cakes Margaret has made”? She preferred to be ‘in the background’ but without her support over the past 20 years our cake stalls, parties, bazaars and AGM events would not be so ‘mouth wateringly’ tempting!

Margaret will be sadly missed by us all here at the Opportunity Centre and we send our deepest sympathy and condolences to Helen, Pete and family.

## Friends of the Centre

Following our Jumble Sale, the Centre collected together items for the Bags2School scheme, sending off 450kg of clothes and raising an additional **£225!** Another collection has been arranged for Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November.

The annual Three Charities Bike Ride took place on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May; despite poor weather predictions conditions on the day were perfect (if a little windy!) So far over **£6000** has been collected, to be divided between the Centre, The Milestone Holiday Activity Scheme and The Nigel Hunter Nursery.

Poor weather and a clash with holidays meant that our Garden Party in May was a small gathering, but everyone enjoyed the beautiful grounds and the live entertainment. Special thanks to Andrew and Jane for allowing us to use their beautiful garden and for inviting us back again!!

A small but lively Ann Summers Party was held on 24th June raising about **£60** for the Centre.



Jessica Burton provides live entertainment at our Garden Party

It was beautifully sunny when the Mayor of Coleford, Sue Merrikin, opened our Fun Day, held at the Centre on Saturday 2nd July. This set the mood for a really enjoyable event - packed full of exciting stalls and games including Crazy Skittles, tombolas, the Stocks and Guess the Balloons in the Car (kindly loaned to us for the event by Winner Garage). All this plus food from the colourful cake stall and the BBQ! Visitors enjoyed the live entertainment from Lydney Training Band before the Children's Fancy Dress Competition and were then serenaded by Jessica Burton. The day finished at 2pm following the Raffle, drawn by Chair of the Trustees, Terry Williams. The Fun Day is the Centre's biggest fundraising event of the year - this year raising over **£1200**



Terry Williams bravely faces the stocks!

### In the Garden Quiz

In July, *Friends* member, Wendy Ford, organised a quiz with a "garden" theme which was won by Roy Merrikin. Answers are available on our website. Keep your eyes peeled for more quizzing fun in September!

We have had a number of people organising external fundraisers on behalf of the Centre since our last newsletter. We are very grateful for all the support we receive...please see page 4 for details of all those who have helped us this term.

## Ongoing Fundraisers...

### Declutter your DVDs and raise money for the Centre

Simply bring your unwanted DVDs and CDs to Reception and we'll do the rest

The Centre gets 50p for every eligible CD or DVD we collect. Items need to be in good, playable conditions with artwork/covers - they must still have barcodes! Copied discs and promotional DVDs (i.e. free from newspapers) are not accepted.

### Treat Yourself (or someone else!)

Barbara Hedges, licensed No Hands Massage Therapist, has donated some of her time to raise money for the Centre. Buy a voucher for a 1 hour treatment for just £10 (that's a third of the usual cost) and all proceeds go to the Centre.

## Looking Ahead...

Our next Fundraising Event is our **Charity Golf Day** to be held on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> August at Bells Golf Club. Tickets for this event are £35. The day will start at 9.30am with breakfast - Bacon Rolls and a hot drink before starting on the course at 10am. Afterwards, a ham, egg and chips meal will be provided followed by a presentation. There will be a variety of prizes for competitors.

Other events still in planning include:

**Jumble Sale - date TBC**  
**Beryl Griffiths Flower Arranging Evening - 2<sup>nd</sup> November**  
**Christmas Fayre and Raffle - 10<sup>th</sup> December**  
**Charity Auction and Ball - 24<sup>th</sup> March 2012**

Keep an eye on our website at [www.childoc.org.uk](http://www.childoc.org.uk) for more details about these events or find us on Facebook! If you would like further information about these events or are interested in joining the Friends of the Centre, please contact Louisa on [louisa.davies@childoc.org.uk](mailto:louisa.davies@childoc.org.uk) or 01594 837552.

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[www.childoc.org.uk](http://www.childoc.org.uk)

**Children First for Health** at [www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk](http://www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk)

An award winning health and hospital information website run by Great Ormond Street Hospital, for teenagers, children and parents.

**Contact a Family**

[www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)

A site providing support, advice and information for families with disabled children, no matter what their condition or disability.

**Carers Gloucestershire**

[www.carersgloucestershire.org.uk](http://www.carersgloucestershire.org.uk)

Information and support you need to make life easier for you and the person you care for.

A new **health and wellness website** at

<http://www.webmd.boots.com> features medically reviewed news, reference, medical imagery, video and interactive tools.

The **Dietary Alert Card** at <http://www.dietarycard.com/> is for people with food intolerances and allergies and is especially helpful when eating out or abroad

**Whizz-Kidz**, the national youth mobility charity, has launched a new campaign calling on government to **Fast Forward** wheelchair provision for disabled children and young people. Find out more at <http://www.whizz-kidz.org.uk/>

**Wheelchair users and their carers** can claim free entry into five top British attractions during the coming months, as part of Gowrings Mobility Matters Roadshow. The offer is valid on selected days at Marwell and Cotswold wildlife parks, Woburn and Longleat Safari Parks and the RAF Museum in Shropshire. See [www.gowringsmobility.co.uk](http://www.gowringsmobility.co.uk)

**Gloucestershire Road Safety** website at [roadsafety-gloucestershire.org.uk](http://roadsafety-gloucestershire.org.uk) has lots of free advice and guidance on safety issues with children

## Staff List

Who's who at The Opportunity Centre?

**Marilyn Smith** - Centre Manager

**Gordon Cruickshank** - Finance & Facilities Co-Ordinator

**Hayley Badman** - Lead Early Years Practitioner & Family Support Worker

**Kerry Smith** - Deputy Early Years Practitioner & Forest School Leader

**Kelly Bishop** - Early Years Practitioner, Playscheme Leader & Family Support Worker

**Ann Richards** - Crèche Worker

**Phil Sargeant** - Minibus Driver/Volunteer Crèche Worker

**Glenn Egan** - Minibus Escort/ Relief Driver

**Georgina Ford** - Trust & Grants Co-Ordinator

**Paula Smith** - Receptionist/Administrator

**Louisa Davies** - Fundraiser

**Louise Powles & Lin Fewes** - Cleaners

### We would all like to give a huge thank you to the following for their very kind and generous donations over the last 3 months:

**Martin Seccombe** at **Am-pm Design & Print** for printing our Spring newsletter, **Julie Burton** and the staff and clients at **Changes Salon** for raising **£45.23**, **Sally Millwood-Bryant** and the staff and clients at **Whitecross Leisure Centre** for raising **£22** and the staff and customers at the **Lower Lane Super Stop** for raising **£36.53** through our Guess the Name of the Teddy Bear competitions, the Friends of **Charlie Mitchell** at **Sling Club** for raising **£1008.50** through various events, **Jane Burris** at **Scoops, Cinderford** for collecting **£20.44** in their collecting tin, **Ashley Putland** for raising **£141.29** at two Miss Felicia events, **Mrs Trigg** for collecting **£8.33**, **Gwen Parker** for collecting **£5**, **Rachel Smith** for collecting **£30.05**, **Revolution Cycle Shop** for raising **£74.27** in their collection tin, **Noble Foods** for their donation of **£237** and various items for our Fun Day, the **Forest of Dean Motor Club** for raising **£5066.39** at their Charity Night, **Richard Bennett** and **Rank Outsiders AFC** for raising **£178** at a charity football match, **Barbara Hedges** for donating her time to raise money for the Centre, the **GSK 3 Peaks team** and **John Shaw** for nominating us, **Mr & Mrs Jotcham** for their donation of **£400**, **Doug Bacon** and **A&S Packing** for their donation of **£500**, **Sarah Mitchell** and **Calico Interiors** for supplying and installing the new blinds in our foyer, the **A & R Cunynghame Charity** for their donation of **£50**, the **Baily Thomas Charitable Fund** for awarding us **£8000**, **Four Acre Trust** for giving us **£10,000** and the **Old Spot Trust** for awarding **£300** all towards our Playscheme and Family Days, **Coleford Town Council** for giving **£1000** and the **Dulverton Trust** for awarding **£2500** for our Parent Support Group, **Headley Foundation** for giving **£2000** for our Forest Schools sessions and **Gloucestershire Community Foundation** for awarding **£5000** towards our integrated session.

All those who helped at our Garden Party: **Matthew Davies**, **Michael Kennerley**, **Laura**, **Jess Burton** and **Allan Cantwell** for helping us with entertainment, **Andrew** and **Jane MacBean** for the use of their garden, **Pam Milan** for bringing her beautiful items to sell at the Garden Party. All those that supported our Fun Day: **Sue Marsden** for donations of various items, **Mary Payne** for donations of tombola prizes and **£10** cash, **David Littlewood** at **Eastnor Castle**, **Sarah Richards** at **Hobos Salon**, **Lynne Wentworth** at **Dean Forest Railway**, **Nadine Carr** at **Primrose Farm Tearooms** and the **Amazing Hedge Puzzle** for their donations of prizes, **Adrian Williams** at **Winners Garage** for the loan of a car for our Guess the Balloons in the Car game, **Michelle Brooks** for her jewellery stall, **Lydney Training Band**, **Jess Burton** and **Mark Young** for helping with the entertainment, **Marc Barnett** for sourcing the food for us **Sue Merrikin**, **Mayor of Coleford**, for opening the event and all our volunteers who ran stalls on the day.