



Opportunities

The Newsletter from The Forest of Dean Childrens' Opportunity Centre

Volume 1, Issue 2

March 2007

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Spring into Spring!



Firstly, may I wish you all a very happy 2007, and hope that your Christmas was a restful and enjoyable time. This, the 2nd edition of Opportunities, is packed full of news, info and lots more.

The Grand Christmas Draw was a huge success, not only with the fantastic prizes, but also thanks to you and your families for buying so many! Prize-winners on page 2.

The Playscheme New Year Party was very popular as ever, full story on page 3.

We held a cake stall at The Four Forest of Dean Towns Festive Foods & Christmas Crafts Fairs in November, and donations of cakes was very generous, and they went like the proverbial hot ones! Raising a very respectable £90. Thank you to everyone who made and donated cakes.

In the February half term we had our new canopy installed in the outside play area, it is a fantastic addition, read more on page 2.

Make sure you put the 7th May in your diaries, this will be our grand open day at the Centre, and as it is a bank holiday we are hoping for great weather! More below.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter, and remember comments are always welcome.

Best wishes,

Maxine



Before.....see inside for after!

"By the time a man realises that maybe his father was right, he usually has a son who thinks he's wrong"
Charles ~Wordswoth, Preacher

The Centre Open Day

We are planning an open day at the Centre this year. This is primarily to promote our facilities and to show off our fantastic Centre! There will be lots of information about all our groups, including the Early Years Centre, and all the services we offer can be discussed with staff. We will also be launching our new website. You may recall, we held a FunDay last summer, which was highly successful, and this year we have decided to combine the two events, which will be held here at the Centre on Monday 7th May (May Day Bank Holiday). There will be stalls and entertainment for all the family, so please come along to support us and have a great day!

Staff Update

We have had a couple of staff changes this term: we have a new minibus driver, Keith Fisher has taken over all the minibus driving, so for those of you who have not yet been picked up to come to the Centre, keep a look out for Keith!

We wait with anticipation for news of Liesel and Stuart new arrival! While Liesel is on Maternity leave we have been joined by Tina Moulinie who has already become a valued member of staff and is doing a sterling job helping to ensure the smooth running of the Centre.



Nurture Group

In September 2006, in response to parents requests, we started running a parent & child group for parents who have a child aged from birth to 3 years with a special need/disability. It is called the nurture group and runs throughout the year, including school holidays, each Tuesday 9.45am to 11.45am at the Centre. The group allows parents to meet with others who are in a similar situation as themselves where they can share experiences, ideas, thoughts, views or just chat.

The Centre has a wide range of specialist equipment and toys which the children have fun playing with, as well as exploring the many other activities and rooms within the Centre, such as

our wonderful Multi-Sensory Room.

This Group is open to all families who have a child aged 0–3 years with a special need/disability living anywhere within the Forest of Dean area, although consideration will be given to families living in Monmouthshire and Herefordshire that express a wish to attend. There is no charge for sessions and those families who do not have access to transport can be collected from home and taken to the Centre and back in our minibus.

As with all services run by the Charity there are no referral forms needed, if you are a parent, family member or professional who knows of a family who would benefit from this group, please contact Marilyn at the Centre.



Hayley Pritchard at the Nurture Group's Christmas party

All Weather Canopy

Being able to provide an outdoor play area that is accessible to the children whatever the weather is something all the staff at the Centre have been hoping for for many years. Many of the children love to be outside, whether it is snowing, raining or as last summer, baking hot! But with increasing dangers of sun damage exposure to the sun has to be limited to ensure the children's safety. We were delighted then, that after many hours of preparing and writing numerous grant applications, we were eventually successful in obtaining funds to enable an 'outdoor playroom' to be built. This would not have been possible without the support from Ashley Drew, a director from K W Bell Group Ltd, who has given not only his but also his teams professional expertise throughout, as well as a great deal of his time, thank you Ashley! We would also like to thank Chris Snell at Greenfields Ltd, for his support.



Book & Video Library



Just a reminder for parents that books and videos on a wide range of issues are available to borrow from the Centre. Please feel free to pop in and browse through our selection which is situated in the reception area. We are always looking for new publications that would be of interest to parents and welcome suggestions and recommendations. We would be grateful for donations of any books or videos you no longer need which other parents may benefit from borrowing. A very big thank you to those parents who have already donated. Once you have chosen a particular book or video, please book out at reception. We ask that you return them within 4 weeks, but they can be booked out again if there is nobody waiting. We are in the process of putting together a leaflet of all titles and a small write up of the contents, for you to take away and read through, so look out for these within the next few weeks in the reception area.

New Year Party

Once again the Playscheme's New Year Party was a huge success. Thanks to the generosity of Colin Newell, we were able to hold it at Forest Hills Golf Club, where the children had a great time being entertained by Mr Fizz (AKA Andy Field), who did a fantastic job providing games, magic acts and party music. Over 80 children and parents came along to enjoy the fun & games, and thanks to the continued support we receive from Demelza at the Eastgate shopping mall in Gloucester, each child went home with a special present. The Playscheme party's are always a huge success and we would not be able to provide them without the support and generosity of people like Colin and Demelza. So, once again, a very big thank you from all the children and families.

Epilepsy Support Group

If you have a young child between the ages of birth and 7 yrs old who suffers from Epilepsy, why not come along to our support group held here at the centre in our family room on the last Friday of every month, 10.00am–11.30am. The group will cover many topics surrounding Epilepsy, and speakers will come along to talk about specific issues. The group also allows parents/carers the opportunity to meet others who are in similar position to themselves to exchange ideas and have a chat. Transport can be provided for those who require it. Just phone the Centre for more information.

Donations & Thanks

We would like to give a huge thank you to the following for their kind and generous donation over the last 4 months:

Kim Toombs for donating £35.

Frank Johnson at Coinros Park Nursery for donating 4 large glazed garden planters.

Damian & Claire Smith for the 6 booster seats donated for the minibus.

Sue Cole and her friends for donating £156 raised by them at the Coalway Saturday Group. To Engelhard Sales Ltd for donating £25.

Robert & Pat Roberts for donating £40 towards our Conductive Education Facility.

Mitcheldean Carnival Committee & friends for donating £100 raised from their carnival.

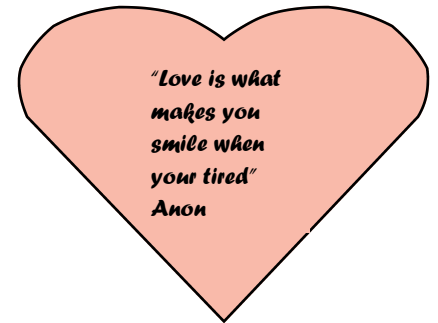
Neil Mackie at Loading Bay Installations Ltd for 2 donations of £30 & £75.

Edenwall Lodge for their donation of £300 raised from a sponsored walk through Offas Dyke.

Kevin Hale at State of the Art in Cinderford for donating £5.

Mr & Mrs Bowkett from Mace stores in Cinderford for also donating £5.

Jess & Matt Giles for all their donations towards the Christmas Draw.



2006 Grand Christmas Draw

Last year volunteer and mum to Eliza, Nadine Blewitt, volunteered to organise a grand Christmas draw to raise funds for much needed toys and equipment for the Centre. We had a fantastic response both in donations of prizes and selling an amazing 4,000 tickets raising in total £732.50. Thank you Nadine, for all your hard work in collecting prizes and selling the largest amounts of tickets. We would like to thank the following for donations:

Mr K Bonser for £25 Debenhams voucher:

Won by Bev Couzens

Matt & Jess Giles for £30 Dog & Muffler meal voucher:

Won by Liz Mizen

Ensors Butchers for a magnificent Gammon:

Won by S Edwards

Mr D Watkins at the Soldiers & Sailors Club in Cinderford for 2 bottles of Whiskey:

Won by Dan Hyatt & P Leach

The Bluebell Restaurant for £30 meal voucher:

Won by Melissa

Hawthorn Pets for 2 £25 pet vouchers:

Won by Phil and Chris Price

HG2K for a cut & blow dry and a pedicure:

Won by Josh Billingham & Colin Nash

Coleford Cinema for 2 cinema vouchers:

Won by Nat & Leon.

For a full list of all donations and winners visit our new website.



Eliza Blewitt drawing a winning ticket

Spring/Summer Diary

Easter Playscheme:

10th, 11th, 16th, 17th April 2007.

Contact the Centre for booking forms.

Family Day to Bristol Zoo:

Wednesday 18th April.

Contact the Centre for booking forms.

FunDay at the Centre:

Monday 7th May



Epilepsy Support group:

Starts Friday 27th April 10.00am—11.30am, and every last Friday in the month.

Nurture Group:

Tuesdays 9.45am—11.45am (term time only)

Support Group:

Thursdays 1.00pm—3.00pm. (term time only)

Opportunities

Forest of Dean Childrens
Opportunity Centre
Bowens Hill Road
Coleford
Gloucester
GL16 8DU

Phone: 01594-837552
Fax: 01594-837662
Email: admin@childoc.org.uk

**Support for children and families
with special needs**



Dishwasher, Tricity Bendix. Well used but in good condition. £50 o.n.o.
Contact Tina at The Centre.

If you have any items for sale please let us know and we will advertise them on this page.

The Last Word.....

Useful Contacts

If you do not have internet access at home you can use our PC in the Parents lounge.

www.5aday.nhs.uk To find out what counts as one of your 'five a day' plus some clever tips and recipes.

www.inst-chiropodist.org.uk For information on the development of your child's feet—click on 'foot care' then on 'children' or 'the child's foot'.

www.projectparticipate.org Strategies for the inclusion of children with disabilities in the classroom.

www.orpha.net Directory of research projects for rare diseases

New section of the orphanet website on rare diseases. The site also has details of support groups in the UK and Europe.

www.domesticviolencesupport.org.uk

For confidential information and support for anyone throughout Gloucestershire who is affected by domestic abuse. You may be living with, considering leaving or continuing to have problems from your abusive partner. This site offers advice on safety planning, emotional support, supported accommodation and much more.

www.asbah.org

The Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus is the national charity for people with Spina Bifida or Hydrocephalus, their families and carers.

[Www.netmums.com](http://www.netmums.com)

A dedicated website for mums of babies, toddlers and school age children.

Staff List

Who's who at The Opportunity Centre
?

Marilyn Smith—Family Services Manager

Liesel Townley—Centre Co-ordinator
Tina Moulinie—Centre Co-ordinator (maternity cover)

Kerry Smith—Assistant Family Services Manager

Claire Smith—Playscheme Leader/Crèche Worker

Julie Robins—Receptionist/Administrator

Maxine Jolly-Burton—Administrator

Maz Myers - Caretaker/Cleaner

Kaye Creed—Cleaner

Bonnie Taylor—Crèche Worker

Jacqui Reddan—Crèche Worker

Keith Fisher—Minibus Driver