



Opportunities

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

Charity No:284975

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Welcome to the summer edition of Opportunities. As I write the sun is shining, lets hope it lasts, unlike last year! In this edition you'll find lots of good news stories especially the one below!

Also, a new timetable can be found for sessions running from September.

Details of the summer Playscheme can be found on page 3, and early booking is recommended.

If you've ever thought you'd like to help in your spare time, (however much or little you have of it!) take a look on page 3 and read about volunteering, and there are some useful web links on page 4.

Enjoy your summer!

Maxine



Error – In the last issue of Opportunities it was published that 2008 3 Charities Sponsored Bike Ride raised a total of £6,000 when in fact it should have read £4,000. We apologise for this error.

BBC Children in Need Support The Centre



In April this year we were delighted to receive a grant from BBC Children in Need, a whopping **£73,020!!** This was all thanks to the hard work and dedication of Jeff Demaree, Temporary Trusts & Grants Fundraiser, who returned back to the USA in March. The award is split over 3 years and will ensure that Marilyn Smith, Hayley Butler and Kerry Smith can continue to support families in the Forest of Dean Area, as well as Hayley running the Playscheme and maintaining the Centre's minibus. Well done Jeff!

Get the latest news



You can now read all the latest news from the Centre by visiting the web site at www.childoc.org.uk and clicking on the link on the home page. If you have some news that you would like to share with families and supporters please email it to us at admin@childoc.org.uk, whether it is an event you are holding to raise money for the Centre or a good news story about children that access the services at the Centre, we would love to hear from you.

Events

3 Children's Charities Sponsored Bike Ride & Walk On Saturday 9th May 2009, three children's charities: The FOD Children's Opportunity Centre, Nigel Hunter Nursery and Milestones Holiday Activity Scheme held this event for the second year at Beechenhurst. We were very lucky with the weather, which although windy was bright throughout! More than 70 people took part in all three categories: 25 mile bike ride, 10 mile walk and 3 mile Treasure Hunt. The BBQ worked hard to keep up with demand, the Tombola had a continuous queue for some great prizes. The children enjoyed sticking their collected treasures to make a picture and making candles. As well as some sumptuous cakes on sale. To date the total raised through sponsorship and stalls on the day stands at £3,200 with more sponsorship coming in every day. We look forward to holding this event again next spring. Thank you to everyone who made sure the day was a great success.

Centre Fun Day The Centre held it's fourth annual Fun Day on Bank Holiday Monday 25th May 2009. For the first time in 2 years the weather didn't disappoint and we were able to use every available space both inside and out! We were very lucky to have the Army open the event, with Paul Facknell and Simon Haddon from 1st Battalion, The Rifles, Beechly Barracks joining in the fun by getting a soaking in the stocks! They also helped to judge the Children's Fancy Dress Competition, won by Kelsey Johns (aged 9) as a very colourful clown, Shay Roberts won the skittles and Sam Hudson and Eve Jones won the Milk The Cow. Thank you very much to all those who came and supported us, so far we have raised in excess of £1,200! Well done to Paula Smith, Kerry Smith, and Kelly Bishop who organized the event. Just 12 months to go the next one!

Meanwhile at The Dean Heritage Centre's 'Fire and Wood Festival' some amazing sculptures were being made with only chainsaws, and subsequently auctioned on Ebay. The auction closed on Friday 5th June with a fantastic total of £891 for all items! one of which will be travelling to France! Many thanks go to Michelle Roberts for her administration and expertise with Ebay. A very big thank you go's to all the artists who donated their work for auction. You can see photos of all the auction carvings at www.childoc.org.uk

Milkwall Arrows take flight! Milkwall Football Club Darts Team gathered for a 24hour marathon of Darts from 9am Saturday 6th June until 9am Sunday 7th June. The 9 members of the team were sponsored for the duration of the marathon and they held a raffle. With the horrendous weather that weekend, it sure was a time to be inside! Armed with 'X-Boxes' to keep them awake and copious amounts of coffee, as well as plenty of family and friends to support them, to date they have raised £950.00 but are confident this will increase to £1,000. Well done to all the lads, especially to Graham Grindle who not only participated, but provided Milkwall FC premises for the duration. Thanks also go to A180 for providing team t.shirts and Time 2 Logo for printing them.



Milkwall FC Darts Team after 24 hours of arrows!



Dave Harvey with his giant carved Bear raised £555 on Ebay



Ben Couzens gets behind the wheel!

Forthcoming Events:

Parkend Carnival The village of Parkend, near Lydney, will be holding their annual carnival on Bank Holiday Monday 31st August 2009. This is a fantastic day out for all the family and this year the Centre is entering a float in the procession with the theme of Peter Pan. Greenfields Garden Services in Churcham have generously donated the use of one of their trucks and a driver. As in previous years we will also have a stand on the showground providing face painting, Milk The Cow and a lucky dip. So why not come and support us and the Parkend Carnival. See you there!

Sponsored Team Activity Challenge Following the success of last years event, we will be holding another Activity Challenge on Sunday 27th September 2009. Together with Motiva the day will consist of 3 high level team challenges including 1 Leap of Faith. The event is open to children from 8 years old, but there is no upper age limit! Entries are fixed to a maximum of 48 places so early entry is essential. Go to www.childoc.org.uk and click on **view past events** to see a report from last year and you can also visit the Motiva website using the link below for more information on the course. Entries cost £10 per person which will contribute to your overall sponsorship, and all entrants must complete a medical/consent form to be handed in on the day. Entry forms can be downloaded from www.childoc.org.uk/news_events.asp or contact us to get one mailed to you.

For more details about any of these events, please contact Maxine at the Centre. Contact details on page 5.

September Timetable

Price of sessions: 2-3year old sessions £6.00

Pre-school sessions: Pre-school sessions £7.00

Please don't forget that children are entitled to five 3 hour sessions (after the term in which they are three) free through their childcare vouchers.

If you want to find out more about these sessions or to put your child's name down for some, please contact the centre and speak to Marilyn or Hayley.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2-3 year old session 9.00 -11.30	Nurture Group 9.45 – 11.45	2-3 year old session 9.00 -11.30	Early Start Group 10.00 – 11.30 (therapy room)	Pre-school session 9.00 – 12.00
Pre-school session 12.30 -3.30	Little Fledglings 1.30 – 3.00	Pre-school session 12.30 -3.30	Pre-school session 9.00 – 3.00 (all day session)	Planning and assessments
			Support Group 1.00 -3.00 Family room	

Summer Play-scheme

We will be running our Summer Play-scheme from Monday 27th July to Friday 21st August.

Sessions start at 9.30 -12.00 and 12.30 -3.00. Many children stay for a full day, bringing a packed lunch for mid day snack.

Price of sessions: £5.00 half day
 £10.00 full day

There is transport for those that require it, although unfortunately we are **unable** to use the mini bus on: 29th & 30th July and 5th & 6th August. Unless anyone knows of somebody that has passed their MIDAS training and has a current CRB check that is willing to drive for us on those days. Please contact the centre and speak with Marilyn or Gordon if you do know of anyone.

We always finish our Summer Play-scheme off with a fun packed party day. Once again this will be held at Bells hotel in Coleford. There will be entertainment for the children (and adults!). Food for the children will be included in the price. If adults wish to eat they will have to order from the bar on the day. The cost of this day will be £5.00 per child.

Forest Pulse

Just a reminder to families that Forest Pulse, who are based at Hearts of The Forest Special School, work very closely with the Opportunity Centre and provide a wide range of activities, support groups and information for families who have a child with a disability up to the age of 19. They run youth clubs and dance groups on a regular basis as well as holiday activities for school age children. If you would like to find out more about what Forest Pulse can offer you then contact Pam Jones on 01594 826357.

Donations & Thanks




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

Barnwood House Trust for donating £4,760 towards Playscheme, **The Gyde Charity** for donating £5,000, **Jill Trigg** for collecting £19.68 in 5p's! **Waitrose, Monmouth** for donating £239 for purchasing specialist toys, **Moravian Women's Association** for donating £300, **Kelly Cole** for raising £91 in sponsorship for completing the Forest Half Marathon and **St John's Church, Coleford** for raising £70.30 with a prayer tree at their Flower Festival.

Kidstart

Do you know that you can save for your child's future every time you shop, at no cost to you? Every time you shop online at over 200 well known retailers and at selected high street partners, up to 20% of what you spend is automatically saved for your children. Registering with Kidstart is free. Just visit www.kidstart.co.uk and click on the **join now** button, or explore the website for more information.

Family Days Out

Friday 31 st July	Friday 7 th August	Friday 14 th August
Weston Super Mare	Fun-day at Lydney Park	Brean Sands
Coach leaves centre 9.30	Start 10.30	Coach leaves centre 9.30
Coach leaves Weston 4.30	Finish 2.00	Coach leaves Brean 4.30
<p>A day to enjoy yourselves in Weston. Spend the day on the beach, at the amusements, visiting the Sea life Centre, playing on the crazy golf or just wandering around sight seeing. This is a very popular Family Day and it is advisable to book early to secure a place.</p> 	<p>There will be a bouncy castle, crazy golf, use of the tennis courts and ball, parachute and many other games all included in the price. There is a small café where you can purchase food and drinks or bring your own picnic to enjoy in the grounds. Thomas the Tank engine can be seen in the distance on his journeys to and from the Norchard Station at Parkend.</p> 	<p>You can either spend your day on the lovely sandy beach or visit the many amusement parks round and about. There is a large Leisure park where you can buy a day ticket and enjoy all their facilities, including the many fairground rides.</p> 
Cost £6.00 per seat	Cost £2.00 per child	Cost £6.00 per seat

These days are very popular and it is advisable to book early in order to secure a place. If you want to know more about these Family Days please contact Kerry at the Centre.

Volunteers

As a charity we rely on volunteers to help run our services within the centre. This not only helps us to provide a good quality range of services but is also a great way to gain experience and in many cases move on to gain qualifications in specific areas. We are looking for volunteers to help out on a regular basis within our integrated playgroup sessions. This can be for as many or as few days as people wish. We cannot provide expenses for this volunteering but we do provide regular in-house training and offer places to volunteers on any training that is available from outside agencies for those that wish.

To give an idea of the personal development some of our volunteers have gained is:

- Ben has gained his qualification in Conductive Education and now works as a Conductor for children with complex disabilities in Herefordshire.
- Kelly has just finished her NVQ2 in childcare and is going on to do her nvq3 in September.
- Cassie, Chloe and Katie now work as Play Workers within our Holiday Activities.

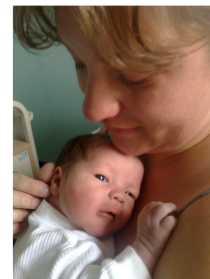
If you are interested in volunteering, or now somebody who may be, then please contact the centre and ask to speak with Marilyn who will be only too happy to meet with you and explain more about the opportunities.

Fundraising Committee

At the Centre we have a very hardworking voluntary Fundraising Committee. We organise events and pool ideas and have a lot of fun in the process. Members of the Committee give whatever time they are able, that may be contacting companies for donations, writing letters, making costumes, giving names of celebrity contacts, or volunteering to help at events on the day. The committee meets once a month at the Centre in the very comfortable family lounge, but if you are not able to attend meetings minutes and information is sent by email. If you would like to be involved, have ideas, or have useful contacts and some free time to help at events, would you like to join the committee?. If the answer is yes, please contact Maxine, and we will be very happy to see you.

Congratulations!

We would all like to send our congratulations and best wishes to Claire and Damian Smith on the birth of their son, Oliver, Matthew born Thursday 2nd July 2009 at 11.20pm weighing 7lb 8oz. Well done Claire, we look forward to meeting him!





News in brief

Riding For The Disabled

There are regular sessions at Tumpy Green riding stables, near Slimbridge. These will run during the school holidays. If you are interested in finding out more about the group and adding your child's name to the list, please contact Elizabeth Davies on 08454 507147 or email tumpygreen@yahoo.co.uk For further details also contact www.rda.org.uk.

Extra Child Trust Fund Vouchers

These have been announced for children in receipt of Disability Living Allowance in April 2010, who were born on or after 1st September 2002. They will be issued from April 2010, £100 for most disabilities or £200 for severe disabilities. Parents invest the vouchers, then the child can use the money plus interest on reaching the age of 18. There are more details on www.cerebra.org.uk

Grandparents

Who look after children under 12, for more than 20 hours a week, will be able to arrange to have topped up National Insurance payments so that they can receive the full state pension when they retire. However, please note that this scheme does not start until 2011.

The Cinema Exhibitors' Association Card

The terms and conditions of this card have changed. Cards issued after 1st March 2009 are valid for one year instead of three, and cost £5.50. They entitle people with certain disabilities to a free ticket for someone to accompany them to the cinema. For details visit www.ceacard.co.uk or telephone 0845 123 1292

Airport Awareness

Travel advice for parents and carers of children on the autistic spectrum. It is designed for Manchester Airport, but could be adapted for other journeys. www.direct.gov.uk/en/disabledpeople

Freebies

Free and discounted items for babies www.babyfreebies.co.uk

Opportunities

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

Staff List

Who's who at The Opportunity Centre

?

Marilyn Smith—Family Services Manager

Georgina Ford – Trusts & Grants Fundraiser

Kerry Smith—Assistant Family Services Manager

Hayley Butler—Playscheme Leader/Ass. Family Services Manager

Maxine Jolly-Burton—Fundraising & Marketing Co-ordinator

Gordon Cruikshank – Finance & Facilities Co-ordinator

Paula Smith – Receptionist

Louisa Davies – Receptionist

Maz Mayers - Caretaker/Cleaner

Becci Revell – Relief Cleaner

Jacqui Reddan—Crèche Worker

Anne Richards-Crèche Worker