



# Opportunities

## The Newsletter from The Forest of Dean Childrens' Opportunity Centre

Aut

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### A Busy Summer!

Welcome to the first, new style newsletter, we hope you like it and you find it informative and entertaining! Feedback always welcome! What a packed summer we had this year not only with the ever popular Holiday Activities Playscheme (read more on page 2), but also the fundraising events. Firstly the car boot sale in July, not ideal weather but a good show from sellers and buyers alike. Then in August the Fun Day, unperturbed by the water logged and unusable Parkend Cricket field, a hasty move was made to Coleford Community Centre (turn to page 3 for more about the Fun Day). As most of you are aware, St Johns School have had a barrier fitted to the entrance of the car park, this has caused a few teething

problems for us, more on page 2. Once again we had our AGM in September, full report on page 3. Enjoy!



Maxine



Birds of Prey at the Fun Day



Nurture Group during Summer Playscheme



Welly Wanging at the Fun Day!



Enjoying the sun at Summer Playscheme

If you have some news that you would like to share, please contact us and it may be included in the next issue of Opportunities. You may have some feedback on a featured item, or a birthday or an event to tell us about. Remember, we welcome your comments!

### A Word From Our Chairperson

Hello all, as this is the first newsletter since my appointment as Chairperson, I would like to take this opportunity of introducing myself. My name is Terry Williams, and I have been involved with the Centre for the past 15 years as a trustee. Since my first involvement with the Centre I have seen it grow and develop to become one of the largest providers of sup-

port to children with special needs (0-7yrs) and their families throughout the Forest of Dean. As you can see from the photograph I am busy building my new house, located directly opposite the Centre! I am always available to supply support and help when needed. I hope you all enjoy reading this newsletter.



We are about to start work on our new, revamped, all singing and danc-

ing modern WEBSITE! We are very excited to be eligible for some match funding for the design of a new website. It will encompass a new branding which we think reflects the true meaning of our work here and encourage everybody to take a look when it is up and running. We will be announcing the opening with a launch party at the Centre.

## Summer Holiday Activities Playscheme

The Playscheme is one of the most popular services at the Centre. It continues to be very busy with approximately 35 children, aged between 2-7 years, attending each session. Embracing the Centre's aims and philosophy's all sessions are integrated, bringing together local children and children with special needs from across the whole of the Forest of Dean area. As we say goodbye to some of the older children, whom we wish well for the future and will miss dearly, we welcome more and more new little faces.

70% of the children who access the Centre have a special need/disability. There is a diverse range of special needs including Speech

and Language Delay, Epilepsy, Downs Syndrome, Autism, Cerebral Palsy to name but a few, including those who do not have a diagnosis. All our sessions are integrated.

This year, our Summer Activities Playscheme was extremely successful, with our theme "Keeping Fit and Healthy" running throughout the 4 weeks. The children took part in various sports, games and activities as well as having the experience of cooking, preparing healthy snacks, and painting with vegetables. All of the activities were adapted where necessary to ensure inclusion of children with special needs. Once a week, Twinkles provided music and movement with the children, encour-



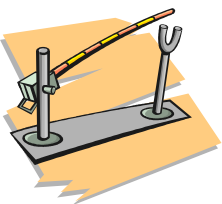
Luke at the Summer Playscheme

aging them to join in with the singing and dancing. The children enjoyed the stories she told with puppets and other props. It was wonderful to see the children so involved and thoroughly enjoying themselves.

If you would like details of the next Playscheme, please contact the Centre.

## Car Park Barrier

As most of you may be aware, The Centre has a car park which is for use by the staff, unfortunately there



are not enough spaces to accommodate visitors, and most of you already park in the surrounding residential roads.

As the car park entrance is shared by St Johns School, they have erected an entrance barrier which can only be ac-

cessed by a swipe card (issued to all staff), or by informing the school reception of your arrival. This has caused a few teething problems which we are in the process of resolving. If you have experienced any difficulties with the newly installed barrier, whether you are a disabled user, have children with a special need or use the Centre out of opening hours and during school holidays, please let us know.

Any comments you may have will be gratefully received.

## Buying Shoes

Russell & Bromley, 100 Promenade, Cheltenham, provide an excellent personal service for children with special needs. They offer appointments before or at the end of regular opening hours, especially Thursday, making this ordeal as stress free as possible. Russell & Bromley sell 'Start-Rite', 'Clarks' and many other leading brands. Appointments are essential. To make an appointment please contact Sally (at Russell & Bromley) on 01242 232762

## Staff Update

Last term saw the much loved Andrea Baynham lead her very last Parent and Toddler session, quite an achievement after 5 years of highly enjoyable sessions for children and parents alike. We wish her every success in her new role at Lakers School. Also, we have wonderful news from Liesel Townley (nee Joice) that she is expecting a baby next March, Congratulations Liesel! You may see bump on your next visit! You may also have noticed the return of Julie to reception, so apart from the rare occasions when she may be unwell, you will see Julies welcoming smile each time you visit the

Centre. Maxine is still in the main office continuing her role as Clerical Assistant.

We also welcome Bonnie Taylor to the Time Out for Parents group, she is already a familiar member of the Playscheme staff, and Jacqui Reddan who will be working alongside Bonnie.



As helpful as ever!  
Andrea applies sun cream for Kerry.

## AGM 2006

We held our AGM on Thursday 14th September, and once again it was a successful evening with very good attendance, lovely to see so many of our parents. There was a presentation looking at the past, present and future of the Centre. It was wonderful to have Anne Smallwood (founder of the Centre) come along to give a talk on how, when and why we began. This was followed by Bev Couzens (our former Chairperson) giving a parents perspective of the present services we offer. This was

rounded off by The Family Services Manager, Marilyn Smith, talking through plans for the Centre's future development. The accompanying photographs and music added a fun element to the presentation. Once again we were supplied with a variety of delicious cakes thanks to the generosity of our Secretary's mum, Margaret. Next years AGM will be held on Thursday 13th September 2007.

## Donations & Thanks

We would like to give a huge thank you to the following for donations:-

Louise Pendry for raising £117.60 by taking a collection tin to her Grandparents, Margaret & Bill Jenkins Golden Wedding Anniversary party, Louise's family has been busy as her Aunty, Alison Evans, collected £26.45 at her newsagents in Berry Hill.

Twins Bethan & Ellie Evans and Lucy Morgan have donated £60 from their birthday money. Georgina & Steven Ford have donated £120 this summer.

Jill & Blaine Sadler raised £350 from donations at their 40th birthday party.

Newland Parish Council have donated £50.

Thank you **very, very** much EVERYBODY! With your generous donations we are able to continue the valuable work that we do at the Centre. Keep them coming!

## 2006 Summer Fun Day

The afternoon before the big day was a complete washout with torrential rain, I was really having kittens and could have cried! There was no way we could use the cricket field at Parkend as was planned, then Jules from Coleford Community Centre came along offering the Centre for the day, and a fantastic time was had by all! I would like to say a very big thank you to Jules, who is a real Jewel!! The day would not have been a success without her. I am proud to support the Opportunity Centre and feel privileged to be part of it's very

valuable work, which is why I decided to have a fun day to try to raise awareness of the Centre as well as raise some much needed funds, though it is safe to say I now have a few more grey hairs! I look forward to the next fun day which I hope will be bigger and better. *Claire.*

We thought we'd provide a little fun in this our first new style newsletter, with a caption competition. This is Marilyn Smith at our Summer Fun-Day, what do you think she and/or Chalky are saying?



Send your entry in to us by January 1st 2007 for the chance to win a fantastic prize!

## Autumn/Winter Diary

This term we have a number of new groups starting.

**Mondays: Time Out For Parents group** 12.45—2.45pm.

**Tuesdays: Nurture Group** for babies and children with special needs 10.00—11.30am

**Tuesdays: Time Out For Special Needs.** 12.45—2.45pm

**Thursdays: Parents Support Group:** 12.45—2.45pm.



Also look out for:

**Epilepsy Support Group** starts in February 2007, details of day and date nearer the time.

**Sunday 26th November**-We will be selling delicious home made cakes at the Festive Foods & Christmas Crafts Event, at the Community Centre.

We will be holding a table sale in reception at the Centre from the end of November. With lots of lovely gifts for Christmas.

Prepare yourself for the Centres Bumper Christmas Draw, to help raise much needed funds to buy new



toys and equipment for the Centre. As you can imagine this will be very costly as some of the specialist toys can be very expensive, but so beneficial

for our children. We have been very fortunate to receive an enormous amount of support from local businesses thanks to the hard work put in by Nadine Blewitt, volunteer and mum to Eliza. So please give us your support by purchasing some prize draw tickets from the Centre, and you could win one of the fantastic prizes up for grabs!

## Autumn/Winter

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Opportunity Centre  
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Fax: 01594-837662  
Email: admin@childoc.org.uk

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

**We're on the web @  
www.childoc.org.co.uk**



## Items for sale

### Baby Annabel:

Doll, cot, baby relaxer chair, car seat,  
baby sling, play gym, changing bag, all in  
very good condition only 11 months old £70. ☎811014

*Barbie blow up ready bed £8*

*And*

*You To Me dolls pram £10*

☎811014

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.hedgehogs.gov.uk/  
main/main.html](http://www.hedgehogs.gov.uk/main/main.html)

Interactive games that teach children about road safety. *You can name your own hedgehog!*

[//shop.downsed.org](http://shop.downsed.org)

Online shop of Downs Syndrome related products (or resources catalogue.)

[www.disabledgo.info](http://www.disabledgo.info)

Information on disabled access to specific leisure facilities and services in major UK cities & towns.

[www.addiss.co.uk/  
sleepseekersbooklet.pdf](http://www.addiss.co.uk/sleepseekersbooklet.pdf)

For parents of children with ADHD. Information on dealing with sleep issues.

### Staff List

Who's who at The Opportunity Centre

?

**Marilyn Smith—Family Services Manager**

**Liesel Townley –Centre Co-ordinator**

**Kerry Smith—Assistant Family Services Manager**

**Claire Smith—Playscheme Leader/Crèche Worker**

**Julie Robins—Receptionist/Administrator**

**Maxine Jolly-Burton—Clerical Assistant**

**Maz Myers - Caretaker/Cleaner**

**Kaye Creed—Cleaner**

**Bonnie Taylor—Crèche Worker**

**Jacqui Reddan—Crèche Worker**