



Management Report: 5/1/15

In terms of fundraising and events, 2014 has been our most successful year to date.

Calendar of Events 2014:

- May: Our Spring Cream Tea and Plant sale was such a success that we will be organising another for 2015.
- June: Was a busy month preparing for our Summer BBQ. However, we managed to squeeze in an art workshop that was open to visitors and an outing to Southend Seafront for lunch.
- July: We were again selected to host the National Citizens Service Government volunteering initiative. The youth group spent one week fundraising for our project and the following week building raised beds and clearing our Dell walk.
- August: Another open art workshop and our annual BBQ and produce sale. The BBQ was again well supported by friends, family and regular attendees. We also had several visitors from other local charitable organisations.
- Sept/Oct: As the growing year finished we were grateful to have several social workers volunteering their services in site maintenance.
- Nov: Time was spent on general site maintenance, planning and the introduction of our latest interest 'Funky Furniture'. Having acquired items of furniture from the Lighthouse charity, we set about painting and up-cycling selected pieces for resale.

We also attended the Frontline Quiz Night and a production of Joseph at the Brentwood Theatre.

- Dec: We were able to contribute decorations, honey and furniture for the Frontline stall at the Lighting up Brentwood event.

Having been chosen as a worthy community charity, we were invited for photos with the Mayor of Brentwood. We received numerous and generous donations from Wilkinsons.

We also visited Sommerhill Garden Centre for Tea and Tinsel and finished our year with our annual Christmas dinner at The Eagle pub.

Events for 2015:

We intend to host all of the events of 2014 with the addition of:

- An away day per month.

As a group we have chosen a number of interesting and informative visits to attend throughout the year. It is our intention to enjoy a social event but to also increase awareness of our project more widely.

The Site:

- Plants: We are also delighted to be planting the floral displays for the borough this year.
- The Dell: Our sensory walk continues to be an ongoing project – constantly changing and renewing elements throughout.

We now have a new water feature but are yet to complete our log cabin.

- Raised beds: We have two new and accessible raised beds thanks to the efforts of the NCS group. These have been selected for soft fruits, to contribute to our existing range of conserves.
- Funky Furniture: We have reorganised some of our workspace in order to house/display our Funky Furniture workshop.
- Fruit Press: The next large project is to revamp the old boiler room. Firstly, we will be removing and selling the old fuel burners and replacing them with a fruit press – subject to our contract.
- Honey: We have purchased another bee-hive and hope to have three in production this year.

Having contacted celebrity chef Michele Roux, we hope to supply honey and herbs to his new Brentwood restaurant – a work in progress.

- Craft: We hope to expand our craft activities on site, thus providing more choice and a wider skill base for our attendees. We are presently discussing set props and design with Brentwood Theatre.
- Market stall potential: With talk of the Entrepreneurs Market in Brentwood, we have contacted and negotiated stall rates should the scheme come to fruition.
- Pop ups: these are becoming popular alternative social gatherings and could provide us with an alternative source of fundraising. The idea is to host invited Summer evening gatherings such as a budget dining experience or a cheese and wine evening.

The Clients:

We continue to monitor our attendees over a 3 month period. Gardening, Art / Craft and Life Skills are assessed simply on a tick chart with numerical indicators. The tasks in each category are graded from 1 – 5 (5 indicating that the task was performed independently). This simple recording system has proved useful in understanding our client's individual needs and limitations, thereby enabling us to provide better care and learning experiences.

We are fortunate that we are able to maintain our client attendance, however we would very much like to increase the number of attendees at The Gates. We receive numerous enquires yet cost and funding applications appear to be the major obstacles.

Local awareness.

Our biannual newsletter is sent to various schools and organisations. We also intend to again promote various workshops to schools and colleges.

Partnerships:

We have received interest from the mental health organisation Mind. Their wish is to form some kind of collaboration and involvement.

We were offered an additional allotment at King George's playing fields in Brentwood by Mind. The hope was to create work parties to encourage member participation. This did not materialise due to their lack of funds. They have however expressed future interest in our art groups.

- Additional Funding:

We continue to be almost entirely dependent on our client placement funds and monies raised at various open days. As

already alluded to, I believe that we need to explore alternative and creative funding avenues on a more regular basis.

In Conclusion

As always, our main challenge is to be creative, educational and productive with very limited funds, albeit this year we have received more interest, donations and support than we have previously. The site is safer and more accessible and we feel that we can provide a more appealing environment for attendees.

Many of our previous issues such as: up-grading toilet facilities and technology have been addressed. We also welcome better integration with other projects within the charity and the support offered to ours.

We look forward to the year ahead with renewed vigor!

Project Leader,
Mary Yiannoullou