

Trustee's annual report

Sept 2023 - Oct 2024

Having been with the charity for nearly 8 years, I've seen many changes to the group and lots of faces come and go. It's always difficult to say goodbye to another member of our group; we're such a close-knit bunch you really notice every absence.

But it's also hugely rewarding to see how much good we can do with such simple acts. One of my favourite moments of this year has to be our trip on the steam train at Whipsnade Zoo. As we rounded a corner and spotted the elephants for the first time, seeing our youngster's faces light up and hearing their gasps of awe.

It's our supporters that make those moments happen. The people who are using everything, from triathlons to stage shows, to raise money for us. The volunteers who show up with a smile every fortnight to give our young people the evening off. And the trustees who work painstakingly behind the scenes to keep the charity running.

So thank you from the bottom of my heart to all of you. Now the wheels are really in motion - I can't wait to see where the train takes us next.



Anna Atherton, Chair of Trustees

Welcomes and Goodbyes

This year we welcomed two new young people, Ellie and Daisy. We said goodbye to 9 young people, some of whom had been with us for many years:

- Armarni
- Colette
- Natalie
- Layla
- Ethan
- Lennie
- Maycie
- Ellie Rose
- Tyler

We wish them all the best for the future. This leaves us with 17 young people currently registered with us.

We also welcomed two new volunteer play-workers, Malackey and Maja, and were glad to welcome our previous group leader Jo Butterfield back in the role of Group Volunteer. Teresa Callaghan also joined our board of trustees, where she now supports our fundraising efforts.

We were sad to say goodbye to Jo Ward who had acted as our Treasurer for some time –many thanks to her!

We are also sad to say that our current group leader, Anji, has handed in her letter of resignation. She has done a marvellous job despite some very challenging issues throughout the year. We are currently interviewing for a new group leader.

Activities

At the end of last year we enjoyed our annual Christmas party. The young people played games, enjoyed party food, and wrapped some gifts that were kindly donated by the Fairview Road Residents Association for their family.

In March we gave out Easter eggs to young people and their siblings, kindly donated by Astra in Letchworth. During the April school holiday we had a Fit Kidz group; and in December 2023, June and October we welcomed Angie from Creative Chefs for some more cooking activities.

In September, thanks to funding from local councillors we were able to take 11 young people on a trip to Whipsnade Zoo. The walkie-talkies purchased last year enabled the group to split up, to make the most of our time there.

As always, our sessions remain a place for the young people to come and play. During Spring/Summer we continue to make use of the playground nearby, and in Autumn/Winter we use the basketball cage and courtyard areas. We also continue to provide quiet activities such as themed crafts and board games.

Current plans for the coming year include a glass-making workshop and a trip to the pantomime at the Gordon Craig Theatre.



T-shirt decorating January 2024



Whipsnade Zoo September 2024



Creative Chef October 2024



Hampson Park October 2024

Achievements and News

To date we have supported 99 young carers, which means the next young person to sign-up will be our 100th young carer! Showing even a small charity can make a huge difference to the local community.

This year, with thanks to our new trustee Teresa, we have also been delighted to welcome a number of visitors to our group. They have included Labour MP Kevin Bonavia, Local Councillor Connor McGrath, and Deputy Mayor for Stevenage Naz Chowdhury. All have been extremely complimentary about the work we do.

Our volunteers have been hard at work in the community raising awareness too. Last Christmas we displayed our own tree at the Hitchin Christmas tree festival which placed second in the Older Children's Class. In August we attended the local village fair, Icklefest, and in September we attended the Hitchin Youth Showcase.

Following the grant received from the KFC Foundation, in May we were invited to support assessment of this year's round of applications. Three young people took part and were given certificates as a thank you for their time.

Next year we hope to take part in events that are more local to our base in Stevenage, such as Stevenage Day and the St Nicholas' Church Christmas tree fair.



Christmas tree festival December 2023



KFC Foundation certificates May 2024



Icklefest August 2024



Hitchin Youth Showcase September 2024

Challenges

The main challenges we face as a charity are generating income and maintaining enough volunteers to continue running the group. Teresa and Peter have worked tirelessly this year to apply for as much funding as possible, and our volunteers have been running stalls where possible to help raise funds. This has been very successful. We have also introduced non-mandatory subs at £2 per month per family, and completed an application to become eligible for Gift Aid. Looking to the future, we would be able to provide better stability with more flexible funding to support the running costs of the group.

We have also increased advertising for volunteers through social media, GoVolHerts, and Evenbreak. Despite a number of applications, we find there is a lack of follow through, so we are still in need of more volunteer play-workers and trustees to support the running of the charity. We will continue to advertise the roles throughout 2025.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following individuals and organisations who have supported our charity throughout the past year:

Altro
Fairview Road Residents Association
Hertfordshire Community Foundation (HCF)
Icklefest
KFC Youth Foundation
North Herts Guild of Singers
North Herts Road Runners
Skipton Building Society
Stevenage Borough Council
Variety Express

Jim Callaghan
Richard Clarke
Beki Havis
Katie Hounsome
Phoebe Hounsome
Colin Kendall

And all our JustGiving and anonymous donors.

Further thanks go to our group leader Anji Archer, and our volunteers:

Anna
Gill
Helen
Jane
Jo B
Jo W
Kalpna
Maja
Mallackey
Nevine
Peter
Sarah
Teresa



Fairview Road Residents Association



Variety Express



St Mary's Church



Richard Clarke

Committee members

No members of the board will be standing down.

Members wishing to remain on the committee are as follows:

- Anna Atherton
- Teresa Callaghan
- Peter Hopkins
- Helen Rowe

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