

## Centre Manager's Report October 2017

Once again we have had a busy couple of months at the Centre. We continue to have an average of 500 Centre visitors each week, attending groups, appointments, assessments and visiting our café and resource areas. Independent Living Association FV held a Board Meeting at the Centre, NHS FV delivered a series of mindfulness classes, and Forth Valley Deaf Children and Families held their annual family fun day, as well as all of our regular groups, classes and bookings. We had a variety of fundraising activities including the Edinburgh Kiltwalk, a Firewalk and the Afternoon Tea and Fashion Show. We also held our first ever community Pop-up restaurant in partnership with Forth Environment Link.

### **Sensory Garden Refurbishment**

We received some fabulous news from environmental project funders EB Scotland that our bid for match funding for our Sensory Garden refurbishment was successful. We now have an additional £21,020 to enable us to complete the refurbishment of our sensory garden. To date, thanks to the money we received from Tesco Bags for Life we have installed some new sensory instruments, re-modelled our water feature, upgraded some surfaces with colourful, user friendly materials and generally tidied the garden removing old fixtures. Over the next few months we will see the construction of a pergola covered seating area, colourful wall screens, interactive sensory boxes, the "Welcome Wall" and some fun themed features as suggested in our garden design which was shared with Centre Users several months ago.

We plan to host a celebratory opening for the newly re-furbished garden in the early spring 2018

### **Publicity and Partnership**

Press coverage remains strong with recent features on a £1000 donation from TK Maxx and our new partnership with Solicitor's for Older People Scotland. Positive media coverage has resulted in invitations for us to further raise awareness about the Centre though speaking at a number of different guilds, clubs and schools. We are extremely fortunate to have Centre Users who are prepared to assist us with giving these talks, as, talking from personal experience really helps to bring the message alive.

Centre news updates are now featured in the Centre on the TV screen in reception and new large TV screen in the Café (thanks to a donation from Braveheart Landscaping), both showing videos of news and topical updates from around the Centre. We plan to start featuring some of our volunteer stories as part of this publicity and we are also happy to discuss including partner news and updates on our visual display. We are in the process of creating some BSL clips to add to our visual display Centre information.

We continue to develop our Social Media presence with Twitter and Facebook growth at no cost to the Centre. Weekly reach on Facebook is over 3500 people from July to October. New followers are tending to stay with our news updates rather than unsubscribe.

The Centre recently supported the Howgate Shopping Centre during Falkirk Storytelling Week by providing a BSL interpreter for one of the children's story-telling sessions. We also helped recruit BSL Elves for Christmas Celebrations at the Howgate to enable deaf children to come along and talk to Santa.

We met with First Bus who have recently undergone a restructure. They have confirmed their commitment to work with the Centre and Centre Users to help make journeys safer. We are planning a joint training initiative with First Bus drivers, Centre Users and staff at the end of November. We hope this training morning will take place at Falkirk Bus Station and will attract some good publicity for both the Centre and First Bus.

### **Volunteering**

We continue to work towards achieving our Volunteer Friendly Award, which recognises good practice and support within organisations who recruit and train volunteers. Our Centre Volunteer Co-ordinator, Caroline, is working with CVS Falkirk to ensure this will be in place in the near future.

We take Volunteer development seriously and therefore we ensure new volunteers receive sensory awareness training as part of their induction to the Centre. We also offer to support employers by offering them sensory awareness training. Caroline has recently participated in Volunteer Leadership training and has delivered induction training and awareness sessions for volunteers and employers which have been very well received.

### **Fundraising**

We are in the process of reviewing our fundraising strategy in conjunction with the Board and we are receiving fundraising expertise and support from our partners RNIB Scotland and Action on Hearing Loss. Moving forward we want to ensure we diversify our funding streams and expand the amount we receive from grants and trusts.

We continue to seek donations and funding for specific projects. This month we received £1000 from TK Maxx Falkirk as part of their community funding initiative.

We have applied to the Stirling-wide grants fund for funding to set up a new fortnightly Knit and Natter group at the Mayfield Centre to replicate the success we are having with a similar project in Falkirk. We have also applied for project funding to the GSK King's Fund, a body that recognises the wider good work that third sector organisations like ours carry out.

Our Centre User fundraising group is gaining momentum and is organising a Halloween Party at the Centre following on from the Dine in the Dark event they hosted earlier this year. We are very proud of our Fundraising Group and appreciative of the amount of energy and effort they are putting in to raise funds for the Centre.

Our final fund-raising event of the year will be the annual Winter Fayre, which will take place on Saturday 25 November from 11am – 2pm. Plans are already well underway to ensure this is an enjoyable festive treat. There will be craft and home-baking stalls, face-painting and Santa's grotto, bric-a-brac and tombola and not to forget our popular bottle stall, which is being organised by our Stirling group. Entry this year is free to encourage as many people as possible to come along, browse and buy. Our café will be open, serving tea, coffee, cakes and snacks. A highlight of the event is sure to be the 2 Christmas Carol performances by the fabulous Sensory Singers who will be performing at 11:15 and 12:30 (two half hour performances).

### **Centre Maintenance and Development**

We have recently arranged for emergency light testing, PAT testing and remedial roof work at the Centre. We also had our front doors overhauled and the wood fascia around the Centre restored and preserved. We will shortly be re-organising our IT suite to maximise space in the Centre and create a separate team room for staff.

### **Groups and Classes**

**\*\*New Class Starting Soon\*\*** We are excited about a new curling group for people with visual impairment. The group will be starting in November at the Peak in Stirling initially on a monthly basis. Transport available from the Centre.

We are also in discussion with the curling organisation regarding setting up a curling group for BSL users.

**BPS Social Group** –The last meeting the group had a speaker from the International Rescue Corp. The Corp travel all around the world helping out with natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods. The next meeting of the group will be on 30<sup>th</sup> October and will have a Halloween theme.

**Bo'ness Outreach Group** –meets on the last Wednesday of the month. This month the group visited Torwood Garden Centre for afternoon tea and a look around.

**Dining Group** next meets on 3<sup>rd</sup> November at The Coppertop at 1.pm.

**Stirling Outreach Group** enjoyed a talk from Rachel Purse a History PhD Student on the restoration of Glasgow School of Art. Rachel is heavily involved in the restoration of the building. Group member Roberta Smith has organised a prize bingo evening on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> November at Masonic Hall, Bannockburn. Proceeds are for the centre! A raffle will be drawn on the night, prizes can still be donated. This promises to be a fun filled evening and it is "eye's down" at 7:30pm sharp! Entrance 50p, everyone welcome.

**Wednesday Group** – Local historian Ian Scott will be giving talks on areas of local interest on the 1<sup>st</sup> November and 6<sup>th</sup> December 10am – 11:30am.

**Knit and Natter Group** – The group will have a stall at the Winter Fayre where their knitted goods will be on sale.

**Tennis** – classes are so popular they are now running weekly on Fridays from 12:30 until 13:30 all welcome.

**Art Group** – Meets from 1 – 3pm every second Wednesday at Camelon Community Centre. Class participants are supported to work on their own projects. New members always welcome. An exhibition is planned for 2018.

**Carers Project** – This session the group will include an art project with Brendan Gallagher, chair yoga with Sandie Murphy, information talks from NHS disability team, Police and Falkirk Carers.

**Lip Reading Classes** – Tutor led every Monday 6pm – 8pm. Fortnightly self-led group on Wednesday mornings

**Personal Safety Class** – 8 week block started 13 October. Next 8 week block will start in January 2018

**BPS Reading Group** – Are looking for new members. Anyone who enjoys reading and chatting informally about books, contact reception. Meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month. Next Meeting 21<sup>st</sup> November..

**Slimming World** - holds classes every Wednesday from 5.30pm

**Drop-in Groups** – Various monthly social groups on Monday evenings

For further information regarding any groups or classes please contact reception or email [brendawhyte@forthvalleysensorycentre.org](mailto:brendawhyte@forthvalleysensorycentre.org)

**Up & Coming Events:**

- Saturday 25 November 11am – 2pm – Winter Fayre \*Free Entry\*
- Sensory Singer Carol performances at local stores in Falkirk on 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> December 10:30 – 12noon (locations to be confirmed)
- The Centre will once again have use of the charity shop in Grangemouth in 2018, dates are still to be finalised and will be publicised in the near future

*Report prepared by Jacquie Winning, Centre Manager, 27 October 2017*