

Centre Report- April 2018

April was a month of new beginnings at the Centre, with the launch of the revised Carers project, the start of a new block of Personal Safety Training and our first ever fund raising prize bingo event. We started our very first Stirling Knit and Natter group at the Engine Shed next to Stirling Railway Station. We welcomed Link Housing Tenants Association and Falkirk and District Access Panel (FADAP) who hosted meetings at the Centre. We were featured on STV and Scottish Council on Visual Impairment (SCOVI) created a podcast and short film about our tennis classes.

1.Sensory Garden Refurbishment

We have just received confirmation that we have successfully bid to adopt a fabulous tactile sculpture for the Garden. The sculpture, which stands at almost 1m tall and is carved from Carrara marble is entitled “Big Wave Vortex” and was created by acclaimed sculptor Tom Allan

Refurbishing work continues within our Sensory Garden. The colourful pergola covered seating area is now complete. Work is underway to create raised beds, bird boxes and seating made from reclaimed materials. We also have a couple of local artists working on designs for sculptures and mosaics to really bring the garden to life.

2.Publicity and Partnership

April has been a strong month for media coverage with STV filming David Black’s Personal Safety Class as part of a feature encouraging more employers to hire people with sight loss. The post gained a lot of interest on Facebook and was shared widely including by other charities like FADAP and The Eric Liddell Centre in Edinburgh. You can watch the footage here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtN9dlPuKtl>

There was also extensive coverage of volunteer John Ormsby receiving a “Hero of Falkirk” medal for completing over 4000 hours volunteering here at the Centre. John has worked with a number of our partners in the building, including NHS Forth Valley, RNIB and Action on Hearing Loss. There is no stopping 72 year old John who has sight and hearing loss and we were proud to see his achievement recognised in such an amazing way.

Following on from the success of the training with First Scotland East bus drivers, we have met with the Operations Manager for Stirling to arrange a similar drop in session for drivers there. It is hoped this will form two parts, some basic BSL training in May, followed by “on the bus” training in June. Watch our social media pages for more information.

We are also supporting a new Sensory Shopping Award at The Howgate in Falkirk. This involves Centre users rating shops on how accessible they are. An overall winner of the Forth Valley Sensory Centre Accessible Shop Award will be announced in an awards ceremony at Falkirk’s City Nightclub in May.

FVSC also took a table at the recent Falkirk Council ‘Believe and Achieve’ event in Grangemouth. This was a drop in afternoon focusing on ability not disability to highlight the support available in the local area. As well as engaging with members of the public, we made some good links with other attending organisations, including DWP who agreed to send their trainee advisors to the Centre to gain an insight into our services and how we can help people with sensory loss build confidence and boost their independence.

3. Fundraising

Our Fundraising Group held another event in April, a Prize Bingo Night which raised over £550! This was a great achievement and the evening went incredibly smoothly. Lots of people attending said they had a great night and would like to attend similar events in future. We hope to hold a quiz or race night over the coming months.

The Fundraising Group is looking for new members and there is no need for participants to have any sensory loss, just an interest in helping people in their local community and spreading the word about the

Centre. If you know anyone who would be interested in giving up a few hours each month to assist us, perhaps a retired person looking for something to keep them occupied or a school leaver wanting something to put on their CV, then please contact Martin at the Centre.

April was also the first Kiltwalk of 2018. There were two Kiltwalkers raising money for Forth valley Sensory Centre, Clare Moroney and Dawn McKinley. Between them they have raised over £500 for our Centre. We would really like to make the Edinburgh Kiltwalk a 'sensory walk' and we already have four people signed up to take part. The event is on 16th September and you can walk 5,13 or 26 miles through some fantastic scenery and mainly on flat ground. All participants are asked to raise £60 as a minimum, with Forth Valley Sensory Centre covering the entry fee and providing a t-shirt to wear on the day. The Hunter Foundation tops up all sponsorship by 40 per cent so if you raise £100 we receive £140 Sign up now and get Kiltwalking!

4.Volunteering

There has been lots of volunteer activity over the last month including the following highlights:

- 12 prospective volunteers attended a volunteer training session, covering sensory awareness training and what makes a good volunteer. Some have already been allocated to opportunities – one to the ConneXions social group; 3 to the garden; one to BPS IT class; one to minibus driving; one to personal safety class and David Black's cookery class.
- Every Volunteer is being offered a support session covering their current activity, development/support/communication needs
- We had a very successful celebration event for John Ormsby – a long standing volunteer who was recognised for his 4,000 hours of volunteering – the event was attended by Provost Billy Buchannan who presented John with a Heroes Award and it was well covered in the local press.

- Voices off café is being run by Zoe Lane (BSL student) and supported by volunteers from the deaf community and NHS Disability Team
- 4 volunteers helped out at the Prize Bingo Night providing support to Centre staff to run the event.

5. Groups and Classes

BPS Social Group –Met on 30th April and were treated to a Tasting session from Blueberry Hill Meals which included freshly made soup and cake. Blueberry Hill is a local company based in Stirling that uses local produce. The next session for this group will be a craft class on 14 May.

Bo'ness Outreach Group – enjoyed an afternoon tea and stroll round Torwood Garden Centre on 25 April.

Dining Group – next meeting 4th May at The Coppertop 12.00 – 2.00.

Stirling Outreach Group- 8th May the group will be having craft session provided by artist Fiona Fleming. They will be decorating terracotta pots with glass beads.

Wednesday Group – Next meeting 2nd May. The Group will visit the Dollar Park Walled Garden, including the Sensory garden for an information talk from Ruth Mulligan from Cyrenians. The garden was the subject of Ian Scott's last talk and the group are looking forward to a visit. Ian Scott will also be on hand to answer questions.

Knit and Natter Falkirk Group –Next meeting 20th May as the 7th May is a public holiday. A BSL interpreter will be on hand to help with communication support.

Knit & Natter in Stirling at the Engine Shed was set up on 13th April and runs 10.30 – 12.00 on alternate Fridays. The next meeting is on the 11th May and will be held at the Volunteer Scotland meeting rooms directly behind the VUE Cinema at Riverside as the Engine Shed is not available on that date.

Tennis – The tennis is cancelled on the following dates 27th April and the 25th May otherwise the classes will be at the usual times except on the 4th May when it will be on from 10.30 – 11.30.

Art Group – Working on individual sculptures and creations. Planning and exhibition later in the year We are arranging a visit to Edinburgh Printmakers during August/September following sensory awareness training for Printmakers staff.

Carers Project – New Drop-In session for the Carers Project started on the 12th April. This is now a slightly different format and will run in 4 week blocks with 1 week off in between. Different speakers including Falkirk Carers will deliver sessions to help Carers find the support they require.

Personal Safety Class – 8 week block started on 6th April

BPS Reading Group – The group is currently full however we have a waiting list for anyone interested in joining this group. Please contact reception who will take contact details and notify when spaces become available. Meets on the 3rd Tuesday of the month.

Slimming World holds classes every Wednesday 5.30 and 7:30pm.

For more information on any of these groups or classed please contact Centre reception or email brendawhyte@forthvalleysensorycentre.org

Up and Coming Events

Race Night date tbc

Kiltwalk, Edinburgh 16 September

Quiz Night date tbc

Sailing Blind Match Racing World Championship, Helensburgh date tbc

Provost Buchannan Sing-a-long concert, Sept/Oct tbc

Report prepared by Jacquie Winning, Centre Manager, 30 April 2018