

## Centre Report- November 2018

### Introduction

It has been another action packed couple of months at the Centre and further afield. Following our AGM in October we held our Open Meeting where we were delighted to introduce our new Board Chair, Pat Reid and Vice Chair, Laura Cluxton. It was also an opportunity to bid farewell and say thanks to Delia Henry who has been a Trustee with FVSC for over 10 years and to Ann Lavery who has represented Deaf Centre Users on our Board for 7 years. Thanks to everyone who came along to the open meeting, I hope you enjoyed listening to our speakers on the day. Laura Cluxton gave an overview of living with sight loss and finding real success through participating in sport; Alison Gall talked about her experience of how having a hearing loss was no barrier to working as a receptionist at the Centre; Ryan Morton explained how beneficial Solicitors for Older People found Sensory Awareness Training which the Centre recently provided for their staff. Other news included our Theatre group who enjoyed a trip to see Calendar Girls at the Festival Theatre last month and we were delighted to welcome back craft genius David Gentles from Falkirk Revive project for another creative sewing session with our Centre Users. Some of our Centre Users with sight loss met with MSP Michael Matheson, First Bus depot Manager Jason Hackett and Falkirk Council Sustainable Transport Manager Chris Cox earlier this month to express their concern regarding the removal of Falkirk Bus station. As a result of the meeting all concerned agreed to give consideration to finding solutions. A follow up discussion will take place in December. The Centre is represented at both Stirling and Falkirk Council BSL Plan strategy groups where we are invited to make comments and suggestions about how our local councils can ensure they adhere to the goals and ambitions set out in the BSL national plan.

### 1.Sensory Garden Refurbishment

Garden Refurbishment is almost complete. We eagerly await the delivery of a 3d scale model of the garden layout which is being prepared by Arka Architect intern Amy McEwan. This model will be installed near the entrance to the garden and will help people with sight loss to get a feel of the layout before setting off to walk around the garden. We are planning a garden launch to officially “open” the garden in Spring 2019.

## **2. Partnership and Publicity**

Students have formed a large part of our recent partnership links. Last week we said goodbye to Spanish student Paula, visiting us from Barcelona as part of the **Erasmus** project. Paula really enjoyed her time here, learning BSL and meeting all of our different clients. She worked hard and was happy to try anything asked of her. We would like to wish her all the best in her studies.

We also welcomed 20 students (with more to follow) from **QMU** in Edinburgh. The students were all trainee occupational therapists and were treated to a tour of the Centre by John Ormsby and an insight into how difficult it can be to perform simple tasks with a sight or hearing loss. Another group of students are expected on November 28<sup>th</sup>.

The **NHS Forth Valley Food and Nutrition Team** delivered a Food and Nutrition course to a number of Centre Users with some good feedback from attendees.

The Winter Fair is almost here and we have some fantastic support from the private sector this year. **Tayside Aviation** are providing our top raffle prize, a pleasure flight over Perthshire, while **Solicitors for Older People Scotland** as well as **Slimming World** and facilities contractor **Mitie** are all providing luxury hampers. We will be enjoying treats from Scottish firm **Tunnock's** again this year following another donation too.

**Tesco Camelon** donated selection boxes for Santa and **Morrisons** provided snacks for our volunteers. The Sensory Singers will also be performing at **Tesco Grahams Road** on 3<sup>rd</sup> December (10:30am-12pm) and at **Asda** in the town centre on 17<sup>th</sup> December (same time) for those who want to attend.

Following the launch of the new Forth Valley Awareness Cards, in partnership with **Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue, Scottish Ambulance, Falkirk Council, Stirling Council and Clackmannanshire Council** our very own Brenda Whyte, was awarded the Divisional Commanders' Merit Award from Forth Valley Police for her help with Police Scotland. Well done Brenda!

In terms of publicity, we have continued to engage with a large number of different organisations on social media, encouraging wider support for our activities and those which might benefit our Centre Users. For example a recent request from The Edinburgh Fringe for BSL speakers to help with a focus group gained a lot of likes on Twitter.

We've promoted the TVC Christmas Craft event on Facebook with over 1000 views as a result and our promotion of the Winter Fair has started in earnest.

Perhaps the best article since the last update was our support of Hate Crime Awareness Week with CSREC. This resulted in a full-page piece in The Sun, with

pictures outside the Centre, for Stephen Smith. Many thanks to Stephen for volunteering his time and telling his story.

### **3. Fundraising**

We have won our bid with **Forth Environment Link** for our Kitchen Garden and Wildflower Meadow. Look out for works in the New Year when the hill beside the Mariner Centre will be transformed into a sea of colour and we will have even more fresh herbs and ingredients for the Café.

We are finalising our **Climate Change Fund** bid at the moment, this will help pay for new lighting throughout the Centre as well as help provide people with sight and hearing loss with information on saving energy (and money) at home.

A bid for a cycle rack has been put into **Cycling Scotland** recently. This will be put in place outside the Café if we are successful and provide people with the opportunity to cycle into work and safely secure their bikes. It will also allow staff from partner organisations to take advantage of cycle to work schemes. It also means volunteers have an alternative method of reaching our Centre, which is well served by a number of cycle paths, including the Helix Around Town Tour or HarTT Route, a 18 mile circuit linking The Wheel to The Helix and beyond.

Bids for a revamp of the Resource Area have now been submitted to **RS Macdonald** and the **SUEZ Fund**. This will see both grant making bodies match fund to provide new seating and shelving throughout. The end result should be a much more welcoming space.

Last but not least our Winter Fair takes place 11am-2pm on 1<sup>st</sup> December this year. A full complement of stalls has been signed up and there will be some great gift ideas. We also have an amazing raffle with a number of very high end luxury hampers and a first prize on a pleasure flight with Tayside Aviation over Perthshire. Tickets will be on sale from the Winter Fair until 17<sup>th</sup> December.

### **4. Volunteering**

We were represented at the Festival of Volunteering in Stirling and it was very reassuring to re-affirm that the way we recruit, train and support our volunteers is very much in line with the recommended model adopted by much larger, established charities.

We have a new volunteer minibus driver who will attend MIDAS training on 21 November, and will then drive the minibus for the Stirling and Bo'ness groups. This means we have two minibus drivers to cover the three groups who require regular minibus transport.

All of our groups and classes are currently covered by volunteers, we plan to operate a waiting list for new volunteers. Volunteer opportunities that still require to be filled include: events/promotion, fundraising and supporting the RNIB and AoHL resource areas.

A refresher course was recently delivered to help develop and refresh volunteers. We plan to organise further training to keep volunteers up to date with Centre developments and also to provide a networking opportunity.

Eleven of our volunteers took advantage of the food and nutrition course run by NHS Forth Valley REHIS, aimed at promoting healthy eating. Offering further training and opportunities like this is an excellent way of showing that we value our volunteers and at the same time giving them something back.

John Ormsby has received some more recognition for volunteering, winning the Falkirk Rotary/Falkirk Herald community achievement award. This award brought both publicity and funds into the Centre as part of the award was a £400 donation to the Centre.

Volunteers continue to support weekly Braveheart outings and ad-hoc events such as the local deaf children's fun day, WW1 Singalong event, Japanese garden visit, older people's day, and the race night. We have 30 volunteers signed up to help with the winter fair.

## **5. Groups and Classes**

We will be setting up a new Digital Stories group in January, (provisional start date Thursday 17 Jan) in partnership with Falkirk Libraries. Centre Users will be able to create and tell their own story about a subject that is important to them. These stories will be captured using i-pads and there will be an opportunity to share the stories to a wider audience at a project celebration in June 2019.

The Stirling Group discussion on New Technology and resources to assist people with sight loss to perform everyday tasks went extremely well. In November, guest speaker Helena Scott, Executive Director from Action in Mind provided some really useful information on mental well-being. The Christmas lunch is on 11<sup>th</sup> December at the Torbrex Inn, Stirling. The group will restart in February with a Burn's Lunch.

The Art Class is held fortnightly in the Centre on Wednesdays from 1.00pm – 3.00pm. The group enjoyed a visit to Callendar House on 21 November for a guided

talk about the exhibition 'Drawn from the Past - The Museum Mind" by acclaimed artist Tessa Asquith-Lamb.

Our History Group will be going on an outing to Historic Environment Scotland interactive exhibition at the Engine Shed on the morning of Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> December. Transport available from Sensory Centre.

The reading group were treated to a book talk by acclaimed Scottish author Maggie Craig as part of Scottish Book Week. This event was organised by Falkirk libraries.

BPS Social Group recently enjoyed a Halloween Quiz, Bingo and entertainment provided by Alec Anderson. The group have their Christmas Lunch and raffle on 26<sup>th</sup> November which will be catered for by the Café. The group restarts on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2019.

The Sensory Singers will be performing at Tesco in the retail park on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December and Asda on the 17<sup>th</sup> December, 10:30am-12pm.

Stirling Knit & Natter; next meeting 10:30am – 12.00 Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> November at Volunteer Scotland Office, Jubilee House, Forthside Way, Stirling FK8 1QZ.

The next date for our popular new Curling group is the 3<sup>rd</sup> December. 3.00pm – 4.00pm. Minibus will leave the Centre at 2.15. Future dates 7<sup>th</sup> January, 4<sup>th</sup> February, and 18<sup>th</sup> March

For more information on any of these groups or classes please contact Centre reception or email [brendawhyte@forthvalleysensorycentre.org](mailto:brendawhyte@forthvalleysensorycentre.org)

## **Up and Coming Events**

- Saturday 1 December – 11am – 2pm Winter Fayre
- Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April Charity Countdown Quiz Event
- Centre User fundraising event suggestions also include; bingo in February, Quiz Night, Afternoon Tea in spring/autumn – (possibly a weekend?) Race Night in September at Dawson Centre or FVSC, Whisky Raffle. Fundraising group meeting in January to finalise dates.

*Report prepared by Jacquie Winning, 23 November 2018*

[www.forthvalleysensorycentre.org](http://www.forthvalleysensorycentre.org)

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