

Home-Start Mid and West Suffolk : Report for the Worlingworth Annual Parish Meeting - Wednesday 19th April

We have had a busy 12 months since I last stood up to tell you our news. Looking back I can report that 50 different families have passed through these doors and attended one or more of our Monday morning play sessions. We meet every Monday 10-12 and are a group open and free to anyone in Worlingworth or the surrounding area who has young children. Our groups aim to provide a friendly fun place for parents and other carers to bring their children. The children get to interact with a range of activities and the adults get a chance to play with their child and also to have refreshments and a chat with other grown-ups which can be a real life saver if you are otherwise restricted to being home.

In addition to our weekly groups I thought I would pick out a few additional highlights from the year:

1. Our Christmas party included a visit from Father Christmas and his elf and each child received a gift thanks to donations made to Home-Start.
2. Our summer holiday sessions which are open to all ages enjoyed some fabulous warm weather and we had many sessions outdoors making use of the wonderful play equipment.
3. We were able to offer a free coach trip to Southwold thanks to Adnams funding. This was the second summer in a row we've been able to offer this in the summer holiday and we took a full coach of local families.
4. We have an established link with the nursery at the primary school here in the village and have loved our regular visits to the school. It's good for the young children to spend time in school before they start and gives parents a chance to look around the facilities on offer. We always have a warm welcome from Mrs Ryan and the rest of the school staff . Memorable visits included a teddy bears picnic in the warm weather and a Valentines themed morning and we have our next visit scheduled for next month.
5. In the last year we have also made links with the newly established forest school run by Charlotte Atkinson at Charlottes wood in Wilby. We have had three visits to the wood for family forest sessions where parents and children together spend a few hours exploring and taking part in activities such as hide and seek, climbing and balancing on logs, making mud pies, painting with mud on fabric, digging, looking for bugs, creating art from autumn leaves and lots more. For one family this was the first time their child had been in a woodland. At Home-Start we are committed to the idea of getting children outside to play as much as possible, interacting with the natural world is so important to a child's development. We hope to be able to do lots more of these visits in the future as Charlottes wood is an amazing resource just on the doorstep!
6. We encourage visitors to come along to group who might be able to offer our parents something that they would find interesting or helpful. We have recently had a visit from the dental health team and hope to offer more of these types of visits in the next year.
7. We took part in both the World Booknight giveaway giving free reading books to the parents at group and also the National Bookstart giveaway of children's books, last summer it was a book about a trip to the seaside which we used alongside our Southwold trip. We will be taking part in both these giveaways again in the coming months. World book night is in April and Bookstart week is in June.

It is very important for me to say that Home-Start Mid and West Suffolk is a family support charity that can only operate as it does thanks to the many volunteers who give their time. I need to thank Jean Clarkson who has been a weekly helper at our group sessions since we opened in 2013. She retired in the Autumn and we held a tea party to wish her well. I am very grateful for all Jean did and I would struggle to run the session single handedly so I am delighted that Jean Richardson and Caroline Lord have both stepped in to help out and I value their support and know the families who attend do also. Whilst on thank yous , can I also thank those responsible for the village hall, it is a great place for our group and we enjoy the facilities, appreciate the storage space and also the upgrades such as the newly renovated and heated toilets which are very nice indeed.

It is always good to end on good news so I'm delighted to announce that we were recently one of three charities nominated for the green token scheme at Co-Ops in Framlingham, Debenham and Eye, after a few months of customers choosing their nominated charity on completion of their shopping we were the overall winner and will be receiving £500 which will be spent here at Worlingworth Family Group to purchase some new equipment and toys for the babies who attend the group. These will be well received I'm sure by the littlest members of our group and their parents so we look forward to getting those and using them here on Monday mornings.

Thank you for listening and please speak to me at the end if you would like to know more about our group or the work of Home-Start in this area.

Julie Sullivan
Group Co-Ordinator
Home-Start Mid and West Suffolk.