

GL11 Community Project

Event report

Event title: Meadowvale Community Event
Date: Saturday 18 April 2009
Location: Springfield/Meadowvale, Cam
Staff: Ann Wheeler, Mandy Bailey, Zac McKerron
Volunteers: Kirk Turner, Paul Ayland
Helpers: Family members
Partners: Sanctuary Shaftesbury Housing Association, Police Safer Communities Team, Neighbourhood Watch, Neighbourhood Wardens, Face Painter

Aim of event: This event was co-ordinated by the Police and Neighbourhood Watch working with Sanctuary Shaftesbury Housing Association (SSHA). SSHA asked GL11 to be involved and GL11 offered to provide a bar-b-que and face painter in addition to display boards/handouts and The Bike Shed.

The purpose of the event was to engage with local residents from the Springfield and Meadowvale Estates, and offer information about the local Neighbourhood Watch team, a chance to speak to members of the local Community Policing Team, and to find out what training/education opportunities are available through GL11 for adults, as well as drop-in groups for adults and children/young people.

Preparation: The organisation of the event was through discussion and brief meetings between parties involved – GL11 discussed with SSHA and met with Michelle Dodd, Police Community Support Officer. Marketing was undertaken through leaflet drops to households by PCSO, and posters displayed locally.

Format: The event ran from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. GL11's Bike Shed brought bicycles, and offered for sale puncture repair kits. In addition, for a fee, they offered to service bicycles. This generated interest particularly amongst the children and young people – one of whom went home and returned with his bicycle which had a puncture. He was shown how to test for, and repair a puncture. Another bicycle was serviced. GL11 staff and volunteers were able to promote The Bike Shed which is a free drop-in group for 13-19 year olds which runs at GL11 on Wednesdays, 4-6 p.m.

Parents were interested in what training is available at GL11, and also gave us ideas for what other training they might like to access. A number of questionnaires were completed by adults as part of an on-going consultation programme linked to GL11's The Learning Community project.

The free bar-b-que (funded by SSHA) was kept busy!

The most popular activity for the children, and some adults, was undoubtedly the face painter (funded by SSHA). She was kept busy throughout the event and this was certainly a big draw for the young people.

Evaluation: Approximately 25 children/young people and 15 adults attended, and created a good atmosphere for this community event.

The event was run from within the heart of Springfield/Meadowvale estates. The purpose was very much to engage with residents from both areas and Meadowvale families were good supporters on the day. The children and adults were happy to chat with representatives from all the different agencies, and one photograph in particular showed the children and young people enjoying the comfort of the mobile Police unit. Overall this was a good example of community engagement – engaging with local agencies, but engaging with each other as families and neighbours.

The efforts of GL11 staff and volunteers have been recognised by the Police, Neighbourhood Watch and Sanctuary Shaftesbury Housing Associations. Our role in supporting this grass-roots event has demonstrated the skills and experience of GL11 staff and volunteers in engaging with individuals and families. It is difficult to quantify in terms of ‘outcomes’ and ‘outputs’ what is achieved at any single community event such as this, but it is the repeated attendance by GL11 at these and similar events working in partnership with agencies and organisations across all sectors that is fundamental in generating the interest and trust of local residents.

As a voluntary organisation, we are seen as a friendly, welcoming face in community working, and individuals/families choose to engage with us – this is very different to the experiences many residents have where they are forced to engage with the ‘official’ face of, say, education, health, social work, and police.

This event was another example of the importance of multi-agency working where a range of partners can be seen working together for the collective benefit of individuals, families and entire communities. I believe GL11 is the only Community Project within the Stroud District Council area offering training/education, services, volunteering opportunities and drop-in groups across all ages. We support the work of many partner organisations/agencies at a truly local level. This collaborative approach makes a valuable contribution to Gloucestershire’s Local Area Agreement targets, particularly those relating to Safer and Stronger Communities.

Ann Wheeler
Project Manager
27 April 2009