

Thank You Richard



Richard Roberts is retiring as Manager of The SMASH Youth Project as of the end of September 2009. Richard started the Project back in 1999 and has been responsible for guiding it for much of the time since then. He was at the helm as it became an independent charity back in 2003 and once again in 2007 as we gained the current round of funding from The Big Lottery. He hands over the reigns with the project helping more young people than ever and having helped literally hundreds of young people to achieve their potential over the preceding years. In his usual modest way Richard will probably say that it was nothing but in truth none of this would have been possible without him. Richard will be sticking around for a little while yet as the Project's fund raiser but I'm sure that everyone involved with SMASH will join us in saying a big thank you to Richard for all his work, commitment, passion and optimism over the years and to wish him a long and very happy retirement.

Project Manager's Message

Hello again. Well, onto issue number 9! Many newsletters fall by the wayside after a few issues but **SMASHing News** seems to go from strength to strength – that's probably because the **SMASH** Youth Project is going from strength to strength! We have record numbers of referrals, so that means that our referral agencies have a lot of confidence in us to help and support young people; we have trained a record number of volunteers to become volunteer mentors and due to the very positive recent press coverage of our work the Project's profile has grown, so that more and more people know who we are and what we do.

The major highlight since the last **SMASHing News** was our daring move to book the De Vere Hotel conference facilities for the day for our combined AGM and Conference that looked at where **SMASH** was going in the future. It was very reassuring to have a good turn out of agencies that shared their ideas on how **SMASH** could advance and become even more effective. My grateful thanks to ex-mentees Charlie and Josh who told the conference about their time with **SMASH** and for Alan who gave a Mentor's perspective and Toby for his overview of **SMASH** from his position on the Trustees. Thanks also to the **SMASH** mentees who helped on reception and guided people to where they should have been!

Okay. Now for the not so good news! Most people are aware that we are currently being supported in the main by The Big Lottery Fund. This three-year support comes to an end on 31 March next year. Over the last two years I have been submitting funding applications so that we have sufficient funds to secure **SMASH** ongoing activities. Two months ago I submitted an application to a national major funder who could have supported the large part of our Project costs, but we have recently learned that our application has not been successful. The priority of course is to keep making applications until we secure funding that will sustain the Project into the future. I am optimistic that our unique Project will be recognised for what it does so well, but I think when we are up against the needs of London, Liverpool and Manchester etc. - perhaps Swindon isn't considered such a needy area? My optimism tells me we will win through but should we not it means that some current mentoring relationships and the volunteers that finish training in October will not be able to finish their commitment of twelve months supportive mentoring. The next few months are going to be critical for the Project but we have so many 'positives' on our side that I know that we will win through – watch this space!

Sadly, this is my last PM's slot, as I have decided to retire. I am delighted to let you know that Rob Chappell will take over as Project Manager from 1 October. However, I am still going to work at **SMASH** for two days a week, purely as a fundraiser, to secure funds to try and sustain the Project into the future. If you are a mentor or stakeholder thank you for all that you have done, or are doing, for **SMASH**.

Richard

YOUNG PEOPLE

Crowdys Climbers have a second successful year



SMASH has completed its second very successful year working with a small group of young people from Crowdys Hill School. The group, who decided to call themselves the 'Crowdys Climbers' set themselves individual personal goals to complete during each session, with the aim of increasing their confidence and self esteem. The session's also provided opportunities for the group to experience new activities and learn how to interact, communicate and work well as a team.

The Crowdy's Climbers' had to decide, as a group, what activities they felt would help to reach their own personal goals; which included increasing self confidence, becoming aware of personal safety, managing stress and anger, and overcoming the fear of failure. Activities they chose to help meet these goals ranged from paying for themselves on a bus (which most had never done before), ordering their own lunch in various cafes and restaurants, finding directions to places of interest, rock climbing, swimming, bowling, visits to the arts and steam museum's in Swindon, and day trip's to Bath by train as most had never been on a train before, let alone visited another town.

The group did find some of the challenges and tasks difficult at times, but to their credit the group always tried their best, and in most cases achieved their goals. As the group became more familiar and comfortable with one another their confidence increased, and being extremely supportive of one another aided their development further.

There were a few tough times, especially when some group members struggled with others' actions or behaviour, however these times were few and far between and easily resolved. There were many laughs had during the year and Rob and I wish them all every success and happiness for the future.
Debbie Murphy – Project Worker

NEW RECRUIT TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

A Warm Welcome to Charlie Lawer who has recently joined the Trustees as a Young People Representative.



Charlie is the second person from the left and Richard is pictured next to her. Taken recently following the Project's successful funding application.

YOUNG WOMEN'S DAY

On Wednesday 29th July six of our female mentee's attended our second **SMASH young women's** day held at The Link Centre.

The morning was taken up by **Self-defence**, where two qualified instructors spoke about street psychology, observation and awareness. This was followed by a workshop where we were taught some basic physical techniques. This was entertaining to say the least, but very helpful and worthwhile.

The afternoon offered a choice of **Manicures and mini facials** from Jo Portsmouth, one of our many talented mentors.

There was an opportunity to have a session of **Reiki** – a simple, natural and safe method of spiritual healing - with Bernice, a youth worker volunteer.

Reflexology - This is based on the principle that tension in any part of the foot mirrors congestion in a corresponding part of the body. It is a relaxing therapy that works on many levels, soothing, calming, balancing and boosting the entire body. Again demonstrations were given by Bernice (another woman of many talents).

T-Shirt designs – our young women took the credit themselves here by creating their own outstanding personal designs on T-shirts, which they got to take away!

All in all, judging by the feedback, a fab day was had by all!

Hope you to see you on our next fun young women's day

Caroline & Debs

WRITING COMPETITION WINNER!

“Hustle and Flow (remix)

What is this world coming to?
People just don't understand anymore
OK den

Hustle and flow
Hustle and flow
Keep on moving
Keep on strivin
Stop the fightin
Just keep on moving
Cos It's hustle and flow.....”

Please see our website blog for the rest of this fantastic remix.

Composed and Written by Shelby Waddington – YP on our Waiting List

STAFF

A Step Up



Having managed to use some of it to book ahead for a number of events and activities, last year's Sports Relief grant is still benefiting the project. Part of it was meant to enable staff to become sports coaches and as a keen climber I was able to use some of it to pay for a week's training at Plas-Y-Brenin in North Wales. I still take a small group climbing indoors each month but I'm now also well on my way to gaining my single pitch award, which will enable me to take groups outside to do some real climbing on some real rock.

Managed by the National Mountain Training Trust, Plas-Y-Brenin is a national institution based in an old coaching inn on the edge of the twin lakes of Llannau Mymbyr near Capel Curig, in the heart of Snowdonia. Having arrived late at night I wasn't sure quite what to expect but awoke to one of the most breathtaking views I have ever seen and a hearty breakfast among some 70 or so other residents, all of whom had come to increase their skills and knowledge as climbers, sea kayakers, mountain leaders and more.

After an initial briefing on day one it was off to meet our instructors. With a ratio of two students to one world class instructor on our course, "Touching Stone," it was obvious from the beginning that we were being given a once in a life time opportunity. Day one was rope work and single pitch climbs among the pine trees and midges above Llyn Llydaw. In true Welsh style the day was cut short by a torrential downpour but after that the sun came out in the most spectacular fashion for the rest of the week. Each day we collected our gear from the stores, joined our mini bus at 9:15am and were taken off to a different crag. By the third day we were climbing eight pitch HS (Hard Severe) climbs hundreds of feet up above the daunting Idwell slabs in the Ogwen Valley. By day four I was leading routes myself, hundreds of feet above Porthmadog, scaling around things referred to in the guide book as "intimidating crux" and "surprise loose hold" with views all the way down the coast of Wales and peregrine falcons stooping from the rocks near by.

The rain held off until Friday lunch time when we were forced to make a hasty abseil retreat from a crag in the Llanberis pass, taking shelter to celebrate my birthday with some of Betws-y-Coed's finest pork pies. A truly life changing week and one that I hope very soon, young people from SMASH will also be able to experience. We already have a couple of young people who have shown some real talent as climbers and one is already better than me after only a few trips to the climbing wall. If I can give them just a little of what I experienced at Plas-Y-Brenin this year, then the sky or somewhere approaching it really is the limit.

Rob Chappell



SMASH...Young People and Mentors input

A big thank you to all the Young People and their Mentors who have been involved in shaping the above strategy for use by all agencies and Organisations across the Borough.

The Working Group consisting of a representation of agencies that work with Young People were aware of the importance of having young peoples views and the response from SMASH was valued and appreciated.

The Young People were asked what they felt Bullying is and indeed what it is not. Their responses included:

“Its not the sort of teasing which goes on when you and your mates are “ mucking about” and everybody is OK”

“Its not someone bumping into you by accident”

“ It is unkind teasing which happens a lot and you know is meant to hurt you and you feel picked on”

“ It is people spreading rumours, writing Graffiti about you, hiding things, making you feel stupid, and threatening you”

“ It is people being unkind and teasing that is happening all the time about you being different in some ways, and turning others against you”

“ it is someone hitting you, kicking you and touching you”

“ It is someone sending nasty texts, E mails, phone calls MSN messages, chatrooms, blogs etc.”

“ Use of their mobile to send embarrassing photos of you to everybody”

All the young people were agreed that it was the persistence of the actions that made it so difficult to bear.

All wanted Bullying dealt with, but had no successful answer as to how this may be done without making matters worse.....that had been their experience...that or nothing had been done at all.

The Government defines Bullying as:

“ Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally”

As we are aware Bullying can seriously damage a child's or young persons confidence and sense of self worth, and they will often feel they are at fault in some way. This can lead to serious and prolonged emotional damage for an individual and can lead to young people even taking their own lives.

Part of the Vision will be to try and prevent Bullying in the first place....build self esteem and confidence and to encourage young people to respect themselves and each other and build positive relationships with others.

The Vision will be launched during Anti Bullying Week later in the year. Thanks again to all of you that were involved.

The National Bullying Helpline Number is: 0845 2255787

Heritage Project

“Backtrack”

We are now looking to involve volunteers from SMASH in our exciting new project called “Backtrack”, which is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The aim of the project will be to look back over the last 250 years (hence ‘Backtrack’) at the working and social conditions of children and young people, starting with the Railway Works in Swindon. We shall be learning about how they were exploited and abused and why measures have now been put in place to safeguard and protect our children and young people of today.

We are looking to recruit interested mentees along with their mentors (if possible) to participate in this new and adventurous project.

We will be visiting STEAM and speaking to retired Railway workers about their memories and experiences of life on the railways in the Great Age of Steam. You will have the opportunity to climb aboard one of the famous locos and walk underneath the great Caerphilly Castle engine, to get a real view from ‘down under’. Is there anyone out there that has relatives/friends that we could interview? We would love to hear from you!

How does a visit down ‘**BIG PIT**’, Britain’s leading mining museum in south Wales sound? The tour begins with being kitted up with helmet and cap lamp by a real miner and descending down a 300ft (90m) mineshaft by pit cage! You will hear first hand what life and working conditions were like for the thousands of men and children who worked down the mines.

Fancy a visit to Southwell in Nottingham to one of the best-preserved workhouses in England? You will have a chance to find out about poverty through the years through interactive displays. Explore the segregated work yards, day rooms, dormitories and cellars and see what life and conditions inside the workhouses were really like.

Once we have built up our body of research we will be displaying our findings in a 5-day professional Arts workshop that will be headed by our friends Toni and Gordon from “No added Sugar” Community Arts Company. This will be followed at a later date with a 5-day Drama workshop headed by “The Sixth Sense Theatre Company”.

Do **you** want the opportunity to meet new people and have some fun?

Contact your mentor or Caroline at SMASH on Swindon 879297 for further details.



INFORMATION

The AGM goes BIG TIME! Friday 24 July 2009

Being a small charity always in need of extra cash to keep the Project running the staff team decided that we wanted to attract lots of people from the referral agencies, and other supportive people, to our AGM this year. Therefore we decided to add extra things to the AGM so we could make the event more attractive.

Mentees from SMASH helped with the reception and we had four people from SMASH who talked about SMASH from their different perspectives. We then enjoyed a fascinating session from the Bristol Playback Theatre Company who interpreted and acted out various stories and situations that people shared with them from the audience. Everyone was very impressed and enjoyed the presentation by them.

After lunch we experienced OST! This stands for Open Space Technology. Through Rob's skill the conference produced various meaningful discussion groups led by people who wanted to share something that was important to them and the agency they worked for. Notes from all the discussion groups have been written up, circulated back to the participants and provided SMASH with some useful ideas for the future.

Thanks to everyone who made the day such a success.

Richard

Thank You

To Mary Nettleton for the donation of £155.00 from the sale of past Christmas goodies and summer flower pouches.

To all those who supported and voted for us in The National Lottery Awards. We were the only local project to make the semi finals of the education

category.

PROJECT UPDATE:

The Project has recently gained the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation "Approved Provider" status. The Project had to go through a rigorous process to achieve this.



SMASH Mentees (and Mentors) Meet the Mayor of Swindon



When young people belonging to SMASH complete a year's mentoring with the Project, they have usually achieved many personal goals that they set themselves during the year. In addition some mentees learn new skills and join in activities that they didn't think they could do. Very often a year with SMASH is a year of self-discovery.

As a Project, we believe it is very important to acknowledge the achievements of the young

people belonging to the Project and we try to arrange a little function to bring both mentees and mentors together.

On a previous occasion the Captain of Swindon town Football Club presented certificates at the County Ground to our mentees. At our last presentation in August our mentees who had completed a year were invited to the Mayor's Parlour in the Civic Offices to share a soft drink and be presented with their certificates. Councillor David Wren made everyone very welcome and presented our mentees with their certificates and a made to measure SMASH T Shirt.

Well done to those mentees who have completed a year and achieved so much.

Richard

CONGRATULATIONS.....

Luke completed two sections of the Bronze award which were the skill and physical sections (there are 4 sections in total). So he has received two certificates (one for each section he has completed successfully). To complete each section successfully you have to commit to and complete 13 weeks of a chosen activity. Luke can complete the remaining two sections to get the complete Bronze award between now and turning 25 years old!

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