

FEBRUARY 2024 UPDATE



Bringing Hope and Focus to Youth & Families of South Wight

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South Wight Youth Partnership | Charity Registration 1160139

SWAY February 2024 Update

A celebration of our Volunteers

Volunteers are a key part of SWAY without whom we could not operate and to celebrate their tremendous contribution, we recently shared a sumptuous feast of refreshments served at Niton Methodist Church. Not all could make the evening, but it was a good gathering of around 14 of our volunteers ranging from parents and young leaders to trustees.

Conversations around our various SWAY experiences and adventures were exchanged as we chatted amiably about our volunteering between healthy fruit skewers, and not so healthy but delicious, chocolate cake and cream horns. Our ever-reliable cook, Pete Taylor, commented on how good it was just to meet other volunteers and talk about what we do.

We had some special visiting guests who were interested in what we do in SWAY and why we do it. It was enlightening to talk with them and share our passion and commitment which we hope was helpful to them. There was a gentle hum of good conversation going on for nearly 90 minutes after the evening's Rock Solid meeting.

As always, it reinforced how vital and important our volunteers are for the life of SWAY. So, for this edition of the Update, we want to shine a light on this essential aspect showing that the volunteers are the beating heart, drive and energy of the whole work.



Hub Progress

The Hub Project Management Group are all volunteers, for example. An enormous amount of work has gone into this project over the last couple of years. This serious labour of love seems to finally be bearing fruit. Southern Housing have agreed to the transfer of land to SWAY, the legal side is currently being drawn up and we hope to start building within the next few months. We hope to have a building to be opened by a very important person by mid-October (the clue is in a previous Update), which is very exciting. Of course, the next stage is raising the funds for a Hub Manager for the first 3 years of its life. The Management Group is hard at work beginning to think about this task. Ideally, we need a Hub Manager in place before the Hub opens. Any help in this area, whether it be fundraising, ideas for its use or skills and personnel, are very welcome. This is a community project as well as a charity endeavour, so please feel able to contribute where you can.

Volunteer feedback

Continuing the theme of volunteering, we want to feature some of the feedback for volunteering that we have received recently. Phil Wells, one of our faithful outdoor leaders, reflected on his role in SWAY:

“Sadly, due to lack of funding, Local Authorities no longer have the staff or expertise to carry out work with young people. Fortunately, there are charities like SWAY who are helping to fill this huge void. By volunteering I hope I’m able to use my skills to help contribute to what they are doing. It is a real pleasure to help SWAY in what they are attempting to do: a work that is hugely important particularly as we



see the number of young people struggling with the pressures of modern society and the effect this is having on their mental health.”

Another volunteer for one of our youth groups gave us the following reason for volunteering with SWAY:

“Having retired recently, I wanted to offer something back to the community and have always enjoyed working with children and young people, so working with SWAY was ideal as there is a great need for young people to have a safe space to get together with their peers, with trusted adults around. Keep up the great work, SWAY!”

How true we know those sentiments to be in our work with young people. They are what drive us on to do more for the upcoming generation.

Volunteer survey

Some while ago, we did an analysis of our volunteering hours offered to SWAY and were taken aback by the results. SWAY has around 20 volunteers, operating at different frequencies and in various roles from mentoring, youth groups, activities on and off the island to residential trips. It is estimated that they offer in excess of



5000 hours a year to the work! This level amounts to 2.5 full time paid workers, which is quite extraordinary. We are very grateful for this level of volunteering, but are also aware that the work needs to grow and more volunteers are always welcome and in fact, needed for the future development of the work.

The requirements for a volunteer are fairly straightforward: an interest in and concern for young people and the challenges that they face, an honest desire to help alongside the SWAY team and a little time to give consistently to our vision to bring hope and focus to the young people and families of South Wight. If you think you might be able to volunteer, please get in touch with Catherine, our Administrator, or with any of the Team or our Trustees. We'd love to hear from you.

Finances

Finances are always a key concern of any charity in these financially straightened days. We will soon be holding our Annual General Meeting in late April, to which you will be welcome to attend, where the financial accounts will be presented by our Treasurer and our Chair sums up the year just gone. This is always a salutary occasion. We are grateful for all the giving to SWAY from so many sources: St Mary's Brighstone, Niton Methodist Church, individual supporters, grants from different bodies like the Police Crime Commissioners and the Methodist Church among others. Without such generous giving we would not be able to survive.

The total of last year's giving, which included both donations and grants, was slightly more than our expenditure. That is very encouraging. However, our Treasurer has made us fully aware that, without further grants or increased giving, there will be a substantial shortfall in funding for the next two years. Therefore, we are considering whether the role of a paid fundraiser could help the charity's finances in the future. We are also looking at grants that may be available and accessible to us, which we haven't yet tapped into. We were at this point a number of years ago, but managed to find a way through, by the means of hard work, prayer, generosity and the grace of God. We find ourselves here again and would ask for your help in whatever way you can provide. It goes without saying it is an urgent matter for our prayers too.

Christmas festivities

Reflecting back for a moment to the weeks leading up to Christmas and 3 special occasions: firstly, a group of young people and volunteers had very worthwhile times in Niton village and Brighstone village, carol singing to those unable to get out very much. It would be fair to say that those visited very much appreciated the



visit and hopefully the carols too! We feel this is a valuable connection between the young and old, that we have been doing now for a few years in villages. We hope to extend it to Ventnor next Christmas.

Secondly, there was the annual Stars of Wonder concert, where a number of young people and a choir from Brighstone Primary School sang to a good audience at St Mary's, at the climax of the Brighstone Christmas Tree Festival. It is always inspiring to see and hear our young people expressing their talent to an audience. It was a bonus that we managed to raise £90 for the School, which was spent on some valuable books for children who have had tough lives and how we might help them through those difficulties.

Thirdly, there was the visit to Westminster Abbey for the Princess of Wales Carol Concert thanks to an invitation from the Lord Lieutenant, Susie Sheldon, for Lucy Peckham, Jacob Mills and Peter Johnson. The silky voices of Beverley Knight and Adam Lambert, the dulcet tones of Jim Broadbent, the amazing pianist Jacob Collier, the sweet voice of James Bay and so much more made this event one to remember for a long time. This was an experience of a lifetime, to be in that very special place, with so many special guests and so many people who also work with the young in our land. It was not an event that they will forget quickly.

Looking ahead

We are just beginning to plan events and activities for the next 6 or 7 months: Sports at West Wight Sports Centre in half term, supporting a pancake evening in Brighstone, a River Project evening at Snacks and Ladders, a Young Leaders' evening in March and both a River Project Day and a Young Leaders' Day in April.

Then of course we have Corf Camp weekend in May and the Lakes residential trip in August. Help with sponsorship for young peoples' places would again be much appreciated - cost to young people will be £200, but the real cost to the Charity is more like £350. As before let us know if you can help by sponsoring a young person to bridge the gap in this funding.

Zoom Cooking

Finally, our Zoom cooking has got off to an excellent start. We have had 4 so far, with more to come (7 sessions in all), running until March. With an average attendance of 10-12 young people and their families involved, this has been a very valuable time for all. In total, 15 different families have received ingredients for cooking a main meal. The most current session involved Sausage, Leek and Apple Pie. Our thanks to Lynne for the sterling work she does here throughout the dark winter nights.

Together, with our amazing team of volunteers, please also remember our core team of Andy, Catherine, Lynne, Olivia (our hard-working student at Moorlands, who is continuing to work hard and relish College life mixed with a busy life in SWAY), and Jacob, that in unison, we can grow the work of SWAY in the South Wight. We are excited for 2024, we hope you are too as you have read this Update. In conclusion, we would just like to say, once more, a huge thank you for your interest, prayers and support for our work in this beautiful part of the Island.



How to make a donation:

You can donate straight to SWAY using the bank account details below, or through our PayPal Giving Page: <https://www.paypal.com/gb/fundraiser/charity/3225911> or Community Hub Just Giving page: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/swaycommunityhub>



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