



Annual Chairpersons Report 2014/15 for Voices 4 Gainsborough Community Library (V4GCL)

Every year with Voices for Gainsborough Community Library, is full of exciting experiences and new ventures and this year has been no exception.

In September 2014 we began our year with the libraries annual certificate presentation for the Summer Reading Challenge. This year we rolled it in with Roald Dahl day and some of the young people came dressed as characters from his books, so we awarded certificates to Willie Wonka, Matilda and a grasshopper among others. We were also lucky to be joined by our regular craft volunteers from the Methodist church, whom together with the children, made a very attractive giant peach, which can now be seen among other creations in the library. The library also saw regular art sessions begin on a Monday morning.



In November we were able to award the first group of children from the library a Bronze arts award from the Arts Council England. We were joined by Mayor Bill Quinton, who was very impressed with the portfolios they had produced, showcasing the projects they had been a part of, including the mural painting on the boards in the car park, visits to see Michael Morpurgo and the annual Pantomime and a MuzicKidz project. November also saw our regular singing group, Singing for the Soul, begin, saw some of our top time members and young people become part of a performance piece with Tilted and saw the beginning of computer support sessions for our customers. At the end of the month, V4GCL were awarded The Stars of Suffolk volunteer group of the year award, after we were nominated by



Mandy, for all our efforts to support the library, community and each other. One of our young volunteers, Lauren, also won Suffolk's young person of the year for facing diversity.

During December we all enjoyed visits from several schools and choirs, who visited the library to sing Christmas carols to the public. Also, at much to the delight of the young people who visit the library, we had a visit from a couple of Donkeys! And we held a Christmas draw and Christmas fair, which was visited by a certain man in a red suit.



To kick off the New Year, I was lucky to accompany some of the young people to the pantomime at The Wolsey Theatre, something I enjoyed thoroughly, Beauty and the Beast was given a whole new rock 'n' roll spin throughout the performance and some of the cast popped up and saw us and stole a few snacks from the young people.

In February half term, I accompanied some of the young people on a visit to Norwich Castle, it was thoroughly interesting, but we were all rather disappointed that we couldn't view Norwich from the battlements.

During March we signed up to be part of Suffolk Libraries new Bookfest festival. We held a rap/poetry session, were visited by some authors and held a storytelling picnic on World story telling day. We were also lucky enough to be the venue for some Hip Hop sessions, which inspired some of our young visitors.

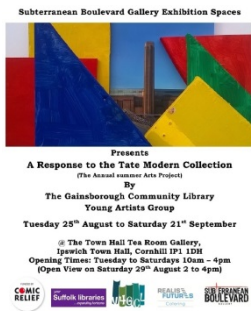


In April I accompanied some of our young people on a hike to Orwell County Park and to Gainsborough Sport Centre for some roller-skating, where I actually managed to get from one side of the hall to the other! Roller-skating has always eluded me! We celebrated World book night on St. Georges Day, when we were again joined by members of the Methodist Church, who worked with the children on a dragon; we also unveiled our new piece of contemporary art work by Natalie Bernthal and "Sunset Treescape" now sits proudly in the library for all to see. World book night also saw Mandy and I hit the streets with a trolley of books, surprising many of our local residents and shop owners as we approached, offering them books to re-discover their love of reading.



The library was visited by Ruth Fitzgerald, author of "The Friendship Fiasco" a book which has proved to be extremely popular with young people, spending little time sitting on the library shelf and more in the hands of eager readers. April also saw Easter

upon us and many young people joined us and our friends from the Methodist group for Easter crafts and an Easter egg hunt.



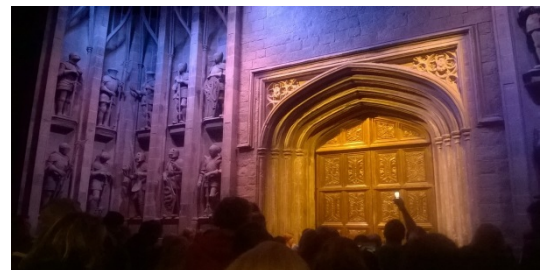
June saw the introduction of “Tinker Tea and Talk” a new pop along craft group which was set up and facilitated but one of our newest volunteers Kristi.

In July Kristi also began running our bingo session, previously ran by Britta, on a fortnightly basis. I was able to visit some local schools to promote the summer reading challenge, something which is always a joy, with many eager young people who love books and a few that wouldn't let me leave until they insured I was aware that they've seen me elsewhere. We also joined other groups in the area to represent ourselves at the Gainsborough Fun Day, which saw lots of hot Rainbows, Brownies and Guides in their Onesies running round the park.



August is always a very busy month for the library and this year was no exception. On Monday afternoons many families joined us for Hama Bead and Loom Band sessions. We ran our annual summer arts project, which this year saw the young people involved getting inspiration from the Tate Modern in London and producing a piece of work which was then exhibited at Ipswich Town Hall. We were joined by Sue Rhodes, the author of Bertie's Monster, whose story telling was both entertaining and thought provoking. We were joined by the Dogs Trust for stories and crafts and we booked our first film screening as part of Suffolk Libraries new live performance project. After much consultation we decided upon the Dutch Ballet's version of Cinderella. Mandy braved a pair of clippers when her son Murray “Braved the Shave” for MacMillan and Josh took the opportunity for a free hair cut! However I don't believe a move to hairdressing would be a positive introduction for Mandy, so she had best stay at Gainsborough for a while longer.

The year for me ended with a reward trip to the Harry Potter Studios in London. It was organised by one of our young volunteers, Lauren and any-one that knows me, will be aware I am a total Harry Potter nut, so this visit was a pure delight. It was a very rainy day, but we were very well looked after by the staff at the studios and everyone thoroughly enjoyed seeing all the sets and props they had only seen on the big screen previously. It was fantastic to be able to truly reward some of our volunteers and exceptional young people in such an extravagant way and I have to say that their



behaviour was a real credit to Gainsborough as everyone behaved impeccably.

I am certain that there are many more activities we have all been a part of which are missing from my review of the year, but as such a prolific group, it's very difficult to reflect on every activity. We still support a regular Scrabble club, boxing fitness for young people, Club 4 Teenz and Leon's Friday night project for our older teens.

We have received some great financial support through various grants, including Comic Relief, Local Councillors, Suffolk Community Foundation and very successful token opportunities at both our local Co-Op and at Waitrose.

We are very lucky at Gainsborough to have a very dedicated volunteer network. Some of the first people I must recognise are our team of café volunteers, who due to their hard work, enable V4GCL to raise the majority of our income and whom have all proved their dedication this year by successfully completing their food safety certificates. Our fantastic team of young volunteers, who run Club 4 Teenz and other young people's sessions, the youngest of whom, Josh, at only 14 years of age, has already completed 100 hours of volunteering, receiving his certificate from V-Inspired. Our dedicated team can also be seen at various events and regular activities and out promoting and representing our library everywhere they go.

It is also a delight that many of the staff members at Gainsborough also give up their own time to carry out volunteering within the library, something I'm certain is rather unique to our library and displays the dedication everyone has to the local community.

As this is my last chairperson's report, I must say how much I have enjoyed representing our humble group. It is a pure joy to be representing a community group who are so prolific and there are several people I must thank for all the support they have given me. Firstly Mandy, our library manager, who has supported me, put up with my moods and stress when I just couldn't think any more! My partner Paul, who always reminds me how I have things to do for our own business! But still puts up with me putting that to one side to volunteer at the library. My daughter Lauren, who I drag into helping me regularly and who I am very proud of for the effort she does put in (although I'm sure with a prod she could do more). Juliet who for a number of years has been here, bringing doughnuts for us to sell and helping out in any way she can. She has supported me as vice chair, stepping in when I've been unavailable and has come along for me to teach her all about social media, fundraising, constitutions and more! So please all direct your tweets to her to be shared with the world! Leon has also been a constant support since I have been chairing for Voices, he also has listened to me moan and stress, paired up with me on trips and events and let me teach him the ins and outs of committees and constitutions, and something I'm sure he has nightmares about.

There are many more individuals I could mention, but I'm certain, by now, everyone is board of my extensive report! I could not thank everyone enough for all they do, but I hope that my acknowledgement comes some way towards it. I'm not disappearing, but I will be enjoying some much needed time taking a back seat while I concentrate on my own ventures and I wish my predecessor as much joy (and hopefully less stress) as I have had over the last three years. I am certain that Voices will continue to grow and will attract more volunteers and support from our local community and beyond.

Alison Catchpole