

GOWRIE NEWS

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PAGE 3

**Good Food
Good Practice**

PAGE 7

**Spring is
coming at QMA**

PAGE 12

**St John's Hill
Football Team**



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WELCOME

Welcome to the latest edition of your newsletter. As always there has been loads going on at the various projects and it's great to hear all about it.

It's easy to contribute to the newsletter. Either send articles to me directly or speak to your support worker who will help.

With so many gardens at the projects hopefully we'll have lots of articles about garden projects, vegetable plots and BBQs for the next edition. Fingers crossed for nice weather in the Spring and Summer!

As always any suggestions or contributions are welcome.

Happy Reading!

Rebecca
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The Monteith Pool Tournament

When Gowrie Care first arrived at The Monteith in November last year, it was quickly recognised that the Service Users were enthusiastic about sport and some of them were keen to get involved in in-house sports competitions, such as Pool and Darts.

We had a few organised competitions before and after Christmas just to see how many service users would turn up. Interest and attendance grew each time, and this led to us suggesting to the service users that we start running a Monthly Pool Tournament. This was met with a lot of enthusiasm and the guys were up for it straight away.

The first competition took place on February 2nd, we had eight entrants, their names went into the hat and the draw was done. The night was a great success, there were lots of healthy competition and loads of great banter throughout the evening, and the champion was really pleased when he was given an HMV voucher for winning the first tournament.

All the service users are looking forward to the next match, so watch this space to see if the reigning champ can do the double next month!

Tony Smith
Support Worker





Good Food Good Practice



At the start of September last year Gary and Yvonne attended a training course called Good Food Good Practice, ran by Edinburgh Cyrenians, the course lasted 2 days.

The course covered basic nutrition and practical food exercises based on the Eat well Plate, food budgeting and menu planning, and ways to help remove some barriers to healthy eating and social inclusion

After the 2 days, the course offered cooking sessions over 8 weeks where staff could put into practise what they had learned and pass this onto Service Users with the support of a cooking tutor from the Edinburgh Cyrenians.

During the 8 weeks, service users from South Fort Street and Bruntsfield Project participated in the course, and you could see everyone becoming more confident in cooking and interacting with each other. The first session finished 10th Nov with Service Users doing a "Come Dine With Us" afternoon cooking for family, project management teams, and Chris the cooking tutor. We had 5 meals to prepare for that afternoon and 4 hours to do it in!!! Well we did it and not a burnt pot was to be found!!!! At the end of the meal all the Service Users who took part in the 8 weeks were presented with a certificate and a recipe book of all the

recipes that we had made.

This also meant Gary and Yvonne became tutors allowing them to keep this course going and continue to promote healthy eating through Good Food Good Practice. We have just started session 2 which has got off to a great start and will be looking to get Service Users from other Gowrie Projects involved at the end of March 2011. So if you would like to learn how to eat healthier and learn new cooking skills, look out for posters which will be sent to all projects with details of how you can get onto the course.



Disappointment at Queen Mary Avenue

Queen Mary Avenue suffered some set backs due to the adverse weather conditions during the winter months and had to postpone all outings. The residents of Q.M.A were looking forward to a fun filled festive period, after securing the minibus for a week.

A residents meeting had been held to decide where they wanted to go on the bus. It was decided there would be a trip to New Lanark, a shopping trip to East Kilbride, a few garden centres and not forgetting the annual trip down to George square to see the lights and enjoy the festivities.

All this excitement was short lived due to the heavy snow fall making it impossible to collect the bus. Although this was an extremely frustrating and very disappointing time, staff remained resilient and worked together to make the festive period just as

much fun for residents without the planned outings. As the weather showed no signs of getting better staff pulled together and arranged for daily indoor activities to take place within the project. Games nights and horror movies were very successful which helped ease the disappointment of not having the bus.

Now that the weather is finally getting better Q.M.A received good news that the bus was booked for the 23rd Feb till 7th March. The residents have been in deep discussion about where they would like to go and have already decided on a trip down the coast to Ayr and a day out at Green Bank Gardens.

Queen Mary Avenue will be making sure they make the most of the bus while they can and will let everyone know what they got up to in the next newsletter.





Clothes Line



Over the last 8 years of support delivery from Bruntsfield Temporary Accommodation Project we have supported over 900 individuals. The amount of waste items (clothing) which have been left behind by departing service users has been a cause for concern. Although we work in partnership with fellow providers and differing charity shops it was still clear enough wasn't being done to reduce this waste and tackle the difficulty in allowing it to gather up. Sustainability is promoted throughout Gowrie Care therefore this was a further reason to review the waste management from Bruntsfield.

After months of consultation with service users it was felt that Bruntsfield should consider setting up a "crisis clothes line" in the building for those continuing to present in crisis. After consideration it was felt that an area in the basement of the project would give us the necessary space we needed to start this project up. It was agreed by all who previously were utilising the project if they left belongings longer than 28 days then these could be washed and recycled and given to others presenting in crisis. This has taken off so well over

the last 12 months, and we as a team wish to thank all who have donated clothing items for the purpose of this additional service.

We discussed with other relevant parties how we could secure funding to operate a Bruntsfield Clothes Line. With great guidance and support we applied through the Edinburgh Waste Action Grant Programme where we have since been awarded £2,224.94.

By receiving this grant it has given us the opportunity to open up this venture into the wider organisation and open up the referral process to those in need of additional clothing.

As previously mentioned many thanks go to the following:

All the service users who have kindly donated clothing they no longer require, all other donations we have received via the wider community including TKMAXX, Karen McLean (Gowrie Care), Brian Stewart Edinburgh City Council, Lindsey Dryden Hillcrest Housing Association and in particular to Anita Sharkey Waste Education Officer. Anita was fantastic in supporting this venture and certainly encouraged further thought processes surrounding the

recycling and reuse of products!

Once the Bruntsfield Clothes Line is fully established we will be alerting you all should you wish to get your hand on some groovy clothing (including shoes, bags and jewellery if you are attending a special occasion although this supply will be more limited)...we will keep you posted!



BEFORE



AFTER



The Monteith goes to The Panto

Due to the very bad weather in December, our planned trip to Edinburgh to see the Christmas lights and German Market had to be cancelled. However, we were fortunate enough to secure some tickets to the Pantomime which was on at The Pavillion Theatre. On the 19th January, 8 service users and staff went along to see the performance of Robin Hood. The cast included Jim Davidson, Colin and Justin from Changing Rooms and also Suzie McGuire from Clyde Radio.

The men thoroughly enjoyed themselves even though they were a little anxious before hand. There was laughing non stop and they even sang a wee song or two.

When the group came back to the project, Innes gave us all a brilliant rendition of the songs that had been sung, along with actions. Staff asked the service users their thoughts on the pantomime and asked for some feedback regarding the outing.

"Pure brilliant, would go again"

"Jim Davidson was great, could we go and see his next show in March?"

"I thought the night was great, I really enjoyed myself"

"I'm very pleased I went"

"I would just like to thank the staff for accompanying us"

Already planning our next trip.



St John – The Eagle

Towards the end of last year we held a competition for all of the service users in St John's Hill to create a logo which represented the ethos of the project as well as what St John's Hill means to the people staying here. We got a fantastic response from everyone taking part and some great ideas. Unfortunately, this meant that the job of deciding which entry would be used was a considerably difficult one!

In the end, our manager chose the winning design by David. David's design is based on the Hillcrest and Gowrie motto of excellence, impact and innovation as well as using the mascot of St John – the eagle. Everyone agreed that this was a worthy winner and David graciously accepted his prize of a clothing voucher as well as some well deserved praise for his effort! We then had to use our new logo and, with the help of other service users, were able to create a computer graphic of the logo to place on all of our internal mail. After sorting out the legalities with head office, we now use our new headed paper for

all our letters to service users. Kirsteen also painted a splendid mural depicting the logo in our drop in room in time for our open day which has impressed all who have seen it. Everybody now feels we have a way of identifying ourselves as a project in a way that promotes our ethos and upholds St John's philosophy of community and involvement.





Spring is coming at QMA

Here at the Queen Mary Avenue Project we are looking forward to planting seeds for this year's crop of vegetables. As last year was our first attempt and most of us were garden novices, we made some mistakes which we can learn from this time around.

A bit of a hindrance for us is going to be the demise of our greenhouse which sadly did not withstand the severe gales of early February. However, we are writing to organisations in the area with the hope some will send donations.

In preparation for the planting we had a big tidy up where staff and residents pulled up their sleeves and worked hard to clear away the debris, and also turn over the soil in the raised beds.

We also had valuable help from Andrea, a seasonal worker with local urban food growing group Urban Roots. Andrea has provided her knowledge and enthusiasm over the past few months and we owe her a big thank you.

Thankfully the day we chose for the tidy up turned out to be clear and sunny, and so everyone enjoyed being outdoors and mucking in.





St John's Hill Open Day

As a staff team we discussed and explored the idea of opening the doors of St John's Hill to external agencies and organisations that we regularly liaise with. The idea behind this was to give people a taster of what St John's Hill is all about, and the service users who live at the project. Over the course of several months we worked closely with service users planning and organising the Open Day. Projects that we worked on included art work for our drop in room, a competition to create a logo for the project and a mural that was completed in our stairwell which depicted the hopes and future goals of the residents at SJH. We also worked on creating a photographic exhibition showcasing our Garden Project, Service User Outings and our football Team.

Over the course of the day we opened our doors to a variety of organisations and agencies. Service users helped manage and coordinate the day, and played a pivotal role in the day's proceedings. Several of the residents provided informative and enthusiastic tours of the communal areas of the project. Service users also shared their own personal experiences of living at St John's Hill. One flat volunteered to be a 'show' flat to give people the opportunity to gain an idea of what it is like to live at St John's Hill, as well as allowing people to have a look at the layout. This proved a popular gathering point, in part due to the drinks fountain set up in the living room area of the flat!

A highlight of the day was the unveiling of our St John's Hill mural. This was the end result of our competition to create a logo that depicted the ethos of SJH. The ideas behind the winning

design and the story of how it was created was also exhibited. This proved to be a great talking point while everyone tucked into the buffet.

A total of 43 visitors attended our Open Day and we have been able to forge new contacts and strengthen working relationships with some of the organisations that attended. The Open Day proved to be very successful, and we received very positive feedback from our visitors. Staff and Service users felt that the day had encompassed all that we had set out to achieve and more.





St John's Hill Garden Project – "Big Things Come From Small Beginnings"



As a result of our application in February 2010 we were granted £350 from the Hillcrest "Improving Lives" fund. This was put towards planning to make the garden at St John's Hill an attractive and facilitating space for 21 service users and the staff team to use during the summer months as a place where we could relax and socialise - whenever weather permitted! Over several sessions we created a file to record everyone's ideas and designed a BBQ and bench seat which were subsequently built by staff and service users over several weeks in early summer.

Wishing to be eco friendly, a compost bin and green house

were part of our design and we used recycled pots which we painted with different and very individual designs to bring a splash of colour and enhance the different plants which we grew from seed. In spite of poor weather lots of flowers bloomed and "triffid" like runner beans scrambled over the railings beside 3 very healthy tomato plants in grow bags! Scented lavender, geraniums, fuchsias and lobelia enlivened the grass and shrub area around our bench seat, giving a lovely background to the subsequent social events we held.

As we head for Spring in 2011 ambitious plans are afoot to expand our ideas, including

growing sweet peas and roses over our garden arch and nasturtiums up tree trunks! For fun we will see who can grow the biggest sunflower in individually named pots! Herb seeds are waiting to be planted in the greenhouse with recycled soil from our compost bin. A wish list for this year includes a water butt which will have a connector into a down pipe from the roof guttering - so we will be saving water as well! Our thanks go to all the service users and staff here at St John's Hill whose enthusiasm and energy have given the project a brilliant start. Roll on summer! - Robbie Lannie [night worker]



It's not About the Price Tag ... Or Is It?

Gowrie's Edinburgh Tenancy Sustainment Service has been out and about visiting some of the projects with a wee shopping challenge that got us all talking and thinking about the difference between the price of well known branded goods and shops own "value" labels.

We took the shopping challenge (with Prizes of course) and looked at what we thought the price of a range of items would be from the value range and the same items but from well known branded versions.

Everyone who joined in found out that they were pretty good at shopping and came really close at guessing the prices of both ranges and whilst everyone had an inkling that the branded goods would cost more we could not quite believe by how much.

Overall the difference was that the value goods came in at about £3.78 and the branded were over £8.00. This was a difference of nearly £5.00!!!! We all felt pretty shocked that these same items had such a different price tag.

SO WHAT ARE WE PAYING DOUBLE FOR?

Aha you may say! The branded ones maybe had better ingredients. In the items in the challenge we also looked at the list of ingredients and found that in a lot of cases the ingredients were very similar in the branded range and their value versions. Often the value items had less salt and fat so were the healthier option too.

Taste does come into choice and some of us had places where we would draw the line. Pretty much all of us preferred branded tea bags and toothpaste.

The challenge had a prize of course & sticking with the theme the winners of the price challenge were given a well known brand of smashing orangey biscuits (cost 11p for one) and the runners up won the value version costing 3p for one. You guessed it we all did the blind taste challenge.

Full Moon, half Moon, Total Eclipse...

We could guess the difference of branded and value, but everyone agreed that the difference in taste was no where near the difference in price.

Following the taste test we put together some of our thoughts on how to cope on a really tight budget and here are the top tips for getting by during hard times.

If you have any questions or worries about managing money just now or in your tenancy get in touch with Karen at the Tenancy Sustainment Service 0131 558 5485.

The service can help with benefits maximisation, grants and furniture packages, social tariffs for fuel, debt management and passporting to services that can offer further help.



Top Tips...

General Budgeting

- When you get paid have a budget plan, make sure you have enough put aside for essentials like food and fuel and pay for these before you do anything else.
- Shopping in supermarkets can be a lot cheaper than local convenience stores but take a shopping list so you don't buy stuff you can't use. Try the value labels they are often as good as or better than the branded versions.
- It's cheaper and healthier to cook from scratch. There are free cooking classes available in Edinburgh through Bethany or Gowrie's Bruntsfield if you are a resident, these classes help you get recipe ideas and confidence in cooking. The classes provide the ingredients.
- When you are in your flat, if you can get a freezer, you can freeze leftovers and buy in bulk,

some supermarkets and frozen goods stores have free deliveries if you spend over £25.00. Go halfers with a friend if you can't use this deal on your own.

- Watch how much you are spending on fuel, speak to a fuel adviser from the energy savings trust (0800 512 012) for tips on how to save money and making sure your home is energy efficient and you are on the right tariff.
- Look into credit union accounts for saving. Avoid taking loans with high APR's - speak to a money worker if you are struggling

When there is a crisis or you can't make ends meet

With all the price rises and new regulations with the DWP people are telling me that they are struggling to make ends meet. In Edinburgh there are a number of projects that can provide free food or food at a reduced price. If you require any of these services ask your support worker for the list of where cheap and free food is available.





St John's Hill Football Team

St John's Hill Football Team started with a few service users who fancied a kick about. Service users and staff played a few games of five a side football and before we knew it St John's Hill were playing regular fortnightly matches against other projects in Edinburgh - and we were winning!

Through some negotiations a regular slot at the Spartans Football Academy was secured free of charge and Tynecastle Football Club donated a full set of football strips. The Team became a talking point within the Project and there was a real level of excitement leading up to the games.

In addition to the regular matches, service users have since gone on to research leagues and other competitions they can compete in.

The determination, commitment and motivation from all service users has been brilliant and something St John's Hill is extremely proud of.

Well done to all involved and keep on winning!!

