



MCSC News

The Home of Community Work

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MCSC STAFF TEAM SET TO EXPAND

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The current MCSC staff team of Richard, Jax, Claudia, Heather and Mike have been a fixture here for the last 3 years and in that time have overseen a massive change in the quality of service offered to our members and an equally impressive upsurge in the quantity of meeting room bookings. The Board of MCSC have been aware for some time of the mounting pressures of an ever increasing workload on such a small team and recently agreed to an expansion of the team which should not only benefit the existing staff themselves but also provide a boost in the quality of service offered to our members.

Firstly, a new role of Centre Administrator has been created. This is a full time support position which will require a highly capable multi-tasker whose job it will be to provide support for Heather, the morning Receptionist, on the one hand and for Jax and Richard on the other. Furthermore, with the departure of Claudia, our afternoon Receptionist (see article below), the Administrator will provide reception cover in the afternoons.

Possibly of more interest to our members and users of the Centre's meeting rooms will be the creation of an "Evening and Weekend Caretaker" role. It is some years since we have had an evening receptionist and several members have been asking for a return. Given how busy the Centre is at weekends, several more have been asking for a Saturday presence. The new position will provide an MCSC presence from 5.30pm till 9.00pm on weekdays and from 9.00am till 2.00pm on Saturdays to provide a meet-and-greet service, setting up of rooms and some general DIY. We do hope you approve.

These positions are currently being advertised until 23 March so please do let Richard, the Centre Manager, know if you, or someone you know, are interested in applying .

SOME SAD GOODBYES

In the midst of our celebrating the expansion of our staff team, we are also sad to announce that two of our key players will be leaving us shortly. We wish them both well.



Claudia Bee will be a familiar face to all who pass through these doors in the afternoon. Claudia has been with us for 3 years now and her friendly manner and urge to help have been a credit to her. Unfortunately, a house move out of area last year meant that we were always going to lose her at some point but we are delighted that she has now found a position closer to home which she starts at the beginning of April.

Says Claudia "It will be a wrench to leave this very special place and I will miss the many kind people I have met."



Mike Brook has become something of a fixture at the Centre in the last four years. His cheerful, helpful manner and can-do attitude have been appreciated by all of us and his willingness to help member groups with everything from putting up curtains and shelves to moving furniture will be sorely missed.

Unfortunately, all good things come to an end and Mike has finally decided to hang up his hammer drill in the next couple of months and will then head off into the sunset for a life of leisure. He will be a hard act to follow!





Scott Milne, The V Team

RUNNING FOR GOLD

On Sunday 11 March Scott, a V Team volunteer, ran the Adidas Silverstone Half Marathon to help to raise much needed funds for The V Team.

The V Team provides a supported volunteering opportunity for people overcoming their own personal difficulties. With full training, support and supervision from a professional Team Leader and an Assistant, they go into the community and do gardening, practical work and DIY for people on a low income who are socially isolated and unable to undertake the task themselves.

Scott has already run two marathons both last year in 2011. He tells us that he really enjoyed the experience and in his own words 'has now really got the bug'. Scott joined the V Team as a volunteer and is now more confident and can talk to people when he used to be so shy. He puts all his progress down to The V Team as everyone involved gave him warmth and made him feel happy. Close friendships between volunteers and customers formed to help him come out of his depression during his weekly sessions. Because of this Scott wanted to give something back to the V Team by raising money through running this half Marathon.



AU REVOIR TO VOICEABILITY...



Sadly, VoiceAbility will be leaving us in April due to losing their funding stream. They have had offices at the Centre since 2008 and have delivered a great advocacy service representing learning disabled and mental health clients. Their work will continue from other VoiceAbility branches throughout the country. We wish them well.



A SUCCESS STORY! Only last year, Mark Goodsall was a client with Tomorrow's People, struggling to enter the job market after two years of unemployment. Citing the support he received from them and the Princes Trust as crucial, Mark is now embarking on a career as a self employed hypnotherapist. Mark gained his Diploma in Hypnotherapy and Counselling Skills and a Diploma in Neuro Linguistic Programming and is keen to help people overcome problems in their lives. His clients seek him out to help with a range of issues from fear of heights to giving up smoking. We are very impressed with Mark's drive and determination and are happy to help him establish his new career. If you would like to find out more or book an appointment, please call Mark on 07771 751745 or visit his website: www.markgoodsalltherapy.co.uk

...BUT BIENVENUE TO KENT SAVERS CREDIT UNION AND ASPIRE 2 BE

We are delighted to announce that two new groups will be taking offices here in April, both of which will be adding to the wide diversity of work that goes on within the Centre.

In the words of John Fowler, Kent Savers' Chief Officer "We provide ethical banking services (currently savings and loan opportunities) to the people of Kent and Medway. We are a not-for-profit banking organisation where key decisions - including a) rates of interest for loans and b) dividends for savers - are made at AGMs by members. We have so far provided over £600,000 worth of loans in less than two years and have received over £400,000 savings (Members can borrow up to £10,000 and save up to £10,000.) We are reputedly the fastest growing Credit Union in UK. We put a lot of effort into trying to discourage people across the county from using high-interest lenders and have a close relationship with 'Stop the Loan Sharks' with whom we have been working extensively recently in Park Wood".

Aspire 2 Be is a small peer led drug and alcohol support service for anyone whose life has, or is being, affected by substance abuse. They will be providing support and advice by offering drop-ins and group sessions and their entirely volunteer led team are looking forward to working with other groups within the Centre.

We are very excited by these two groups joining our ranks and believe that their presences can only benefit all who use this Centre. We want to wish both groups every success and happiness here and look forward to featuring their services in forthcoming editions of the Newsletters.



All three halls were needed to accommodate this oversubscribed event

BRIGHTER FUTURES BRINGS FESTIVE CHEER TO MAIDSTONE'S OLDER PEOPLE

Christmas may seem like ages ago but it is worth reminding ourselves of the work that many of our groups do at that important time of year.

Boxing Day 2011 saw the Brighter Futures team, part of Voluntary Action Maidstone (V.A.M) once again hold a Christmas event at Maidstone Community Support Centre.

This was the 7th year V.A.M has held this event, and invitations were sent out to well over 100 guests and to local volunteers for assistance; the response was so great from the volunteers,

some had to be turned away!

The event was organised by the recently appointed Brighter Futures Project Manager Danny Hewis, who said *"I was blown away by the dedication and support from the local community to older people who would otherwise be on their own over Christmas. Over 40 volunteers gave up their Boxing Day to make the event a success, but we need volunteers all year round as well!"*

Brighter Futures provides support for people over the age of 65 to encourage greater independence and empowerment. With help from the 95 volunteers the older people have support with weekly shopping trips, postural exercise classes, day trips, befriending and telephone support and guidance to over 630 registered clients. There are many people who spend this special time of the year alone, and so the Christmas event was started.

The event relies upon donations and fundraising to pay for the venue, food, presents and entertainment and people and businesses were very generous in Maidstone. A special mention goes to Neil Haffenden, who raised over £600 by running a marathon, Golding Homes who donated £500 and local business Gallagher Group. Lyndsey Gallagher spoke on KMFM radio to help find an entertainer, and the company raised £600 and provided goodies for the raffle and paid for the entertainer.

The day was a huge success, and the faces and responses of some of the guests made all the hard work worthwhile. A delicious meal was prepared by The Walnut Tree in East Farleigh, followed by entertainment, presents given out by Santa and finishing with tea and a raffle.

"We are Debbie and Damien who deliver the Working It Out programme in Parkwood for Tomorrow's People. We work with a task force, made up of 16 to 19 year old volunteers, on community based projects. This course is designed for those who would like to move into work but feel that they don't have the necessary skills, confidence or experience to get the job they want. It is designed both to challenge participants and also to improve self-esteem, confidence, motivation and, ultimately, employability. We have already worked with a variety of charities in the local area, including Marie Curie, British Alzheimers Society, Trinity Foyer and British Wireless for the Blind and would welcome any challenges that may support you".



If you own a business or are a charity and would like to set us a challenge please

contact us on 07825232766 or alternatively E-mail us on

dbailey@tomorrows-people.co.uk or
dtaylor@tomorrows-people.co.uk.

FILMCLUB 2012 SEASON

We were delighted to welcome Laura and Lydia when they took over the running of the MCSC Filmclub in January. The Club puts on FREE fortnightly filmshows for local children from the ages of 7–11. Both are qualified teachers and are supported by a team of volunteers recruited via the Volunteer Centre. Places are still available so if you know of any local families that may benefit from this club please ask Reception for a registration form and further information or call email filmclub@mcsc.org.uk.

Manager's Report



This is an exciting time for us. As reported on previous pages, MCSC are set to expand our staff team and, speaking personally, this couldn't come soon enough.

Over the last few years we have spent a great deal of time and money getting our meeting rooms looking good and as a reward have seen our hourly meeting room bookings increase at a rapid rate. Of course, all of this increase in use has meant an equally dramatic increase in workload for our small band. This they have taken on with good humour and, dare I say it, pride in a job well done. But this workload burden could not continue.

The two new roles that we have created should dramatically increase our efficiency and the standard of service we can provide. An out of hours presence will also help with lone working security and put an end to the endless buzzing on any and every door bell that has gone on of an evening. We hope you will like the changes.

It is unfortunate (and I must stress, coincidental) that this increase in staffing has come at exactly the same time as we are losing two of our number. Both Claudia and Mike will be sorely missed by all of us.

On the member group front, I'm particularly excited to welcome two new groups. Fresh blood and ideas are always welcome in the Centre and I'm sure that both groups will bring their own distinctive styles. Aspire 2 Be are a newly formed self help group and deserve to succeed. I really believe that this Centre is the ideal place for such a group to get established and to flourish.

As for Kent Savers, I'm not sure which side is more excited at the prospect of their moving here. From their point of view, it gives them an ideally located base in the County Town, handy for savers and borrowers to attend and access to the thousands of users of this centre. From our point of view, we get a group that represents the positive side of the banking system. To have a not-for-profit lender whose aim is to support struggling individuals who are otherwise at the mercy of loan sharks is like a breath of fresh air.

Both groups should be with us by mid to late April. In the meantime, amidst all these "hellos" and "goodbyes" I must say a fond farewell to the Voiceability team who will be leaving at the end of this month. On behalf of all of us here, I wish them, Claudia and Mike well in whatever they do.

MCSC IN-HOUSE

SERVICES

These are some of the services offered by MCSC:

Photocopying:

- A4 black & white —4p per copy (A3 8p)
- A4 colour—10p (A3 20p) per side
- Brochure collation, stapling and delivery to your office—FREE

Fax service

- 5p per sheet

Laminating

- A4 30p / A3 60p

Reception Service

- Phone answering and message taking service—FREE * only available to members of MCSC Telephony service who can choose to divert calls.

Meeting room equipment:

- OHPs, Flip charts, white boards, P/A system, TV, video, CD/DVD player.
- laptop and multi media projector.
- Portable Hearing Loop
- All items can be requested when making a booking by ticking the relevant box on the bookings form.

For more information about these and other services our reception team can offer please contact Jackie Avery on extension 103 or Reception on 101.

MAIDSTONE COMMUNITY SUPPORT CENTRE

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