

Friends of Victoria Park - Review of 2012

Focus: Sports and games!

Tea Room and Community Building:

2012 saw the second year and continued building up of our weekend tea room in the Community Building which has gone from strength to strength. We are open every Saturday and Sunday between 10am until 4pm throughout the year except Christmas, New Year, and Easter. We do not have set prices but rely on donations to cover the costs and make any profit - this ensures that our tea room is as inclusive and accessible to the whole community as possible. The tea room is manned entirely by a pool of approx 70 volunteers from the local community who give up their time as they believe in what we are trying to achieve. The tea room has toys that can be used by anyone which allows parents to have a quiet cuppa while the kids play, we have highchairs to use and children's cups if required. We also have bookcases full of second hand books that you can buy, lend or read whilst in the tea room. Wherever possible we use fairtrade products and we also reuse, recycle and reduce as part of our ethos. Having the tea room open allows us to open the toilets up for public use, lend out bowls, boules or tennis equipment to park users, and gives a reassuring presence in the park whilst also discouraging anti-social behaviour.

We are continuing to press the council into giving us a lease for this building so that we have security and can move forward with building improvements. This building is currently being used midweek by a few other groups under our cover, for children's drop in sessions which are going well. We also hope to be able to offer the building to other groups in the future.

The Community Building was re-wired by Trafford Council this year which has allowed us to use more than one heater at a time without tripping the electrics which means the building is now warm in winter!

We have painted the interior of the building this year, along with tiling the kitchen area and planing the external doors to enable them to shut properly for the first time in 6 years!

The toilets connected to the Community Building were out of action for much of this year due to a cracked drain under the over 5's play area which was fixed by Trafford Council just before December. We were lucky enough that the lady bowls team allowed us access to their toilet whilst they were out of order so we could continue our event programme and keep a public toilet open at weekends.

Events:

We have held a fabulously diverse calendar of events this year with over one hundred events in total, our best year ever. Our main events at Easter, Halloween and Xmas were as popular as ever and our Stretford Olymp-Vics event was a huge success. This year we have concentrated on sport and have been lucky enough to gain funding to deliver free sports sessions in bowls, tennis, rounders and boot camps - all a great success that will continue throughout 2013. Film Clubs started in November and shows promise as being a very popular free attraction.

Funding and Projects:

The Friends group were successful in gaining 10 funding bids totalling £17,829.00 during 2012. We again have a 50% success rate for our funding applications during this year. This brings our overall total of grant money brought into the park by FOVPs to £179,673.67

The successful bids were:

£500 from Trafford Housing Trust for our monthly arts and craft session delivery and materials for the year.
£1,840 from Trafford Small grants which allowed us to fund free bowls, tennis, and rounders sessions throughout the summer. It also paid for the sports coaches for the Summer Olymp-Vics event.
£8,160 from Comic Relief which paid for a years worth of free weekly boot camps for adults and children, and a free weekly 2 hour mixed sports session for all.
£505 from Greater Manchester Sports which was used to fund our Stretford Olymp-Vics event.
£1000 from Trafford Housing Trust was used to buy plants for the sundial planting event in September.
£1000 from Trafford Housing Trust was used to purchase film club equipment

£2000 from Trafford Housing Trust participatory budgeting was used to buy and install the dog poo bag dispensers and bags and will also fund Scruffs in March 2013.

£200 from Red Rose Forest allowed us to plant a Beech hedge and some fruit trees in the park.

Our tea room has given us a profit this year - and we hope that this will continue into the future as the popularity of this amenity grows.

Our events and other fundraising activities continue to provide us with a small income that we are able to invest in the park, the group or the event programme.

Our biggest project this year was the installation of our sundial gnomon which is entitled Time of a Generation and was designed by a young Stretford artist called Ben Pepper. We are currently in talks with a sundial specialist to ensure we get the numbers right and installed correctly to make this sundial work. The planting plan for the four surrounding beds were designed by our gardener Rebecca Green and planted by the community in September. Not a single plant has been lost or damaged so far - a triumph of community caring and spirit. Our interpretation board is still under design and will be installed in 2013.

There was some further path repair work done at the beginning of the year at the Victoria Road heritage gates which has been a big improvement.

Our tennis courts have been re-surfaced and re-fenced by Trafford Council. The fencing is brilliant, but the re-surfacing is not so good, although it is better than was there before.

The goal posts on the main field have been turned in their sockets to allow the goal mouths to recover - this is done bi-annually.

Nana's pond has been puddled by students from Manchester University - and was not altogether successful and will be looked at again in 2013 to stop water loss and improve this area for wildlife.

School and Community Works:

We worked with Victoria Park Junior School on 2 occasions during the year. The first being a bird inspired day in February led by the Friends group, and attended by 60 children. This was a great day and everyone seemed to enjoy it. The second day was a summer day with the children looking at minibeasts. They had a picnic lunch and also made and carried out treasure hunts within the park. Again a fun day was had by all.

We have worked with a number of community groups throughout the year and will continue to do this in 2013.

Volunteering Sessions:

We have had a number of volunteering sessions within the park. Manchester University came down to the park and carried out wood preserving, painting, pond puddling and some gardening. The Church of Jesus Christ latter day saints came and did a volunteering day and painted benches and anti-climb paint.

The Group:

This year has seen our group take a bit more of a management role as we have paid others to deliver the sports and arts events on our behalf.

2013 Focus:

Consolidation: Our main focus for this year is to finish off projects that we have already started.

Shelly Quinton-Hulme
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