

The Girls' Friendly Society  
in England and Wales

# PLATFORM NEWS

SPRING/SUMMER 2013

## Everyone's a winner!

Fundraising successes  
to learn new skills

## Celebrating families & friends

Creating, rehearsing  
and plate-spinning!

## New programmes, new partners

Exciting arts and  
sports projects

# New project, programmes and partners

## GFS Islington launches a creative arts programme and a healthy lifestyle programme, and welcomes two new partner organisations.

By January, final preparations were in place to launch two new weekly evening sessions at St Luke's Community Centre and Tompion Community Centre in Islington. Initially we concentrated on outreach work and publicity so we could be sure that partners, youth providers and local young women were fully informed about the new sessions, times and locations. The Tompion Community Centre is the venue for the exciting development of a creative arts programme and St Luke's Community Centre, in partnership with Finsbury Leisure Centre, is hosting our sport and healthy lifestyle programme. Both centres offer flexible access and,

through their respective management committees, are extremely supportive of the development of the GFS Islington young women's project.

During February and March, two new partner organisations came on board. The first is Ironmonger Row Baths, a well-known, historic community sports facility in the heart of London EC1. They agreed to provide free access to young women and single mothers who are not in education, employment or training, twice a month initially. The second new partner is Education and Youth Services, an education and training provider for young people, who agreed to design

one-off training workshops specifically for GFS young women.

February and March were also spent planning the two-week Easter programme based at Tompion Community Centre, as well as our regular ongoing outreach, marketing and publicity. The Easter programme included activities such as pizza-making, arts and crafts, indoor skating, a trip to the Science Museum and a visit to an outdoor activity centre. As a direct result, numbers have increased significantly, and we are engaging a diverse group of young women through the wide range of activities now offered.



During the Easter programme arts and crafts activity session, the young women were provided with a range of creative craft materials with the brief of designing a poster to express their emotions. Nylah (aged 11) said, "I have learned how to be more creative and how to be more confident." Photo by Krystal Donaldson



A team building and discussion session. Participants Tasfia, Nylah, Lauren, Amy and Abigail said that they feel part of a group, and are happy that they have made new friends in a fun and safe environment. Abigail (aged 12) said, "I think this project is fun, it has taken me out of my comfort zone and has given me that confidence boost." Photo by Krystal Donaldson

# Everyone's a winner!

## GFS Skegness welcomes its new Project Manager, and the young women celebrate their fundraising success and new skills.

### Fundraising success!

The young women at GFS Skegness were very keen to set up a project forum which quickly reaped rewards. They were looking for "some recognised qualifications to put on our CVs" – although GFS has limited resources for this, it was agreed that the forum could take up a fundraising approach.

Amy Moss, one of the young women, knows a local councillor, so asked him to help. He couldn't, but knew their local councillor and told them to be quick as there was some money left for the current financial year! Amy approached Councillor Edginton and invited him to come and talk to her, Lena Woodward and Ceejay Fitzpatrick, who are also at the project. They made such a good case for funding that they got a grant of £930. The grant will go towards cooking equipment; funding accredited courses, particularly food hygiene; and on copying facilities for the project. Lena said, "We wanted to give

other women the chance to gain new qualifications, to help them learn new skills and acquire opportunities in the workplace." The forum will definitely be supported to do more fundraising!

### New Project Manager

GFS Skegness welcomed Deborah Brackner as its new Project Manager in November 2012. Deborah has a degree in education, and postgraduate qualifications in marketing and HR. Her track record includes working for Somerset County Council doing youth and community work with disadvantaged 16-year-olds, managing a youth training programme and delivering a work progression service for people with mental health issues. Deborah says that GFS is a fascinating organisation and one she is thrilled to be part of.

### Branch and project work together

The Skegness project is extremely lucky to have Judy Rowson, leader of the GFS Wainfleet branch, helping the young women to develop their

cooking skills. After supporting them during Christmas, Judy was invited to give regular sessions to help the young women learn to cook. She very generously agreed and the cooking programme has gone from strength to strength, producing roast chicken, chicken soup and home-made bread.

The young women's expertise will be put to the test in the GFS Celebration Event in September which will feature a 'GFS Bake Off' so they hope they are in with a good chance!

### Zumba takes off

GFS Skegness was fortunate to get support from East Lindsey District Council for some of the young women to attend a Zumba class when they could use the free crèche for their children. A number of young women are attending classes regularly which has helped their mental and physical well-being. Some are now setting up their own dance business with the help of the Prince's Trust, so watch this space...



The youngest member of GFS Skegness (aged 15) enjoying a cooking session. Photo by Charmaine Wilkinson



Young women, children and staff enjoying a family meal they have prepared on a budget. Photo by Charmaine Wilkinson



A successful Zumba session at the leisure centre, supported by East Lindsey District Council. Photo by Gareth Laking

# Big funding success to visit the big top

## GFS's Butterfly Effect in Great Yarmouth has achieved a successful funding application to visit the Chinese State Circus.

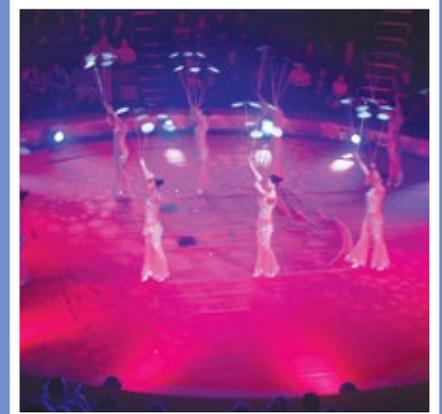
My name is Rebecca. I am 14 years old and I have been coming to the Butterfly Effect for 10 months. Since coming to the Butterfly Effect I have become more confident and gained friendships within the group. The funding application I heard about and completed was promoted by the Mancroft Advice Project. The money originated from 'BOOM!', the Benjamin Foundation's Participatory Budget. They had £1,000 to give to the area of Great Yarmouth for organisations, groups and individuals to promote positive activities.

I got the details from the Mancroft Advice Project, and told project managers Jayne and Lisa about it because I thought it would be a good idea to have a youth activity outside the normal premises. I thought it would be a good idea to visit the Chinese State Circus which was being promoted as a one-off performance at our local Hippodrome Circus. We talked about

the possibility of going to this cultural event which will only be coming to the area for a limited time.

We got the application in an email and read through it, making sure we fitted the criteria. Supported by Jayne and Lisa, I read through the application and filled in the selected boxes. We had to sound professional in relation to the criteria to make sure we would increase our chances of getting the funding. We also looked at the outcomes and what we would gain from this activity and included these in our funding application. I took the lead filling in the application but thought it would be good for everyone to be included in helping fill it out as people would learn how to word an application and sound professional at the same time. Our application was successful and this has really boosted our morale.

Rebecca Clarke, Member, Butterfly Effect



The girls and young women from GFS's Great Yarmouth Butterfly Effect enjoying their evening at the Chinese State Circus. The spectacular show featured amazing acrobatics, colour, music and culture. Photos by Jayne Billman

## A packed house for Mother's Night

On the evening of 16 March, the girls brought their mums, grandmas and female friends to celebrate Mother's Night at St Michael's Stanwix branch. There was tea and coffee, beautifully served by the more senior girls, complemented by home-made cakes, courtesy of the girls and their mums.

We had a very good bracelet-making session using a mixture of new and vintage beads and there were some beautiful results. There was also the traditional quiz which had a music round with an Easter egg as a prize, so there was

plenty of hot competition in that particular round! Parents and carers donated a range of excellent raffle prizes, so much so that we ended up with the odds being a 1 in 5 chance of winning, which wasn't at all bad. The room was absolutely packed. Thanks very much for all the help from the volunteers who were there for the evening.

Following this success, our young leader organised a charity 'Beetle Drive' in May – proceeds went towards St Michael's Stanwix Church, and the new vicar was our guest of honour.

# Celebrating families and friends

GFS St Mark's Layton explored the theme of 'Families and Friends' in this year's Diocesan Festival.



Craft work – designing bunnies for a sleep-over night.



Jessie Middleton sings her first solo at our charity concert.



Laura Howard sings very professionally in her third charity concert.

GFS St Mark's Layton branch had a lively time doing crafts to display at our Diocesan Festival and Fun Day on 18 May. This was combined with a full rehearsal schedule for the Music Festival on 23 March at Standish, near Wigan. Although St Aidan's Mill Hill branch won, we came a very respectable third.

Five branches took part in the Diocesan Festival and each branch gave a 15-minute presentation on the theme 'Families and Friends', followed by a knowledge quiz. The afternoon was a great success, so we decided to hold a cake and coffee evening at Layton after Easter so that the girls could repeat the activities for their parents and friends.

Nine girls and four leaders went on the Diocesan training weekend from 1-3 March. It was held at the Boys' Brigade training centre at Treales and, once again, it was a great success

with over 40 girls and 11 leaders from different branches taking part. It was a busy three days involving 'getting to know you' games and four workshops to create Mother's Day gifts, followed by outdoor activities, challenge games and a quiz.

On Sunday, the girls got into small groups and acted out a passage from the Bible about a family. Our Chaplain said, "Noah will never be the same again" after two of the girls did a contemporary version where they fought, and laughed at Noah as he built the ark. When the animals and Noah's family went into the ark and the floods came the two 'bad' girls were drowned, showing that the Lord should never be laughed at.

Our Chaplain, the Reverend Ian Dewar, arrived in time for lunch and talked to us about friends and family life, making some very interesting points relating to this year's 'Families

and Friends' Diocesan theme. He talked about different families in the Bible and said that although families and friends don't always agree, this doesn't mean we love them any less. He talked about mixing with the wrong type of 'friends', ones who could lead us into trouble. He also told us that if we are in any doubt, we should speak to someone we can trust about the problem, and if we feel we can't speak to our parents, then we should speak to our GFS leader. He made the point, however, that we shouldn't bottle things up inside.

The girls finished the weekend with circus skills, plate-spinning and making animals out of balloons.

By 4pm parents had arrived to collect the girls, goodbyes were said, and the leaders emphasised that this is why they love to be involved with GFS – the girls had really enjoyed their time together and learned something new.

# Let's celebrate GFS!



Creative, celebratory cookery – showcased at the first GFS Celebration Event. Photo by Claire Boothby

## Our second Celebration Event – in Birmingham on 28 September – is focused in the Midlands Area following the success of last year's Eastern Area event.

Once again, we intend to celebrate our work, raise our profile and be a showcase for the girls and young women from local branches and projects. This year they will also have an opportunity to show off GFS's baking and cooking skills. So this also means all branch leaders and members will be able to take part. The Celebration Event is an affirmative opportunity for us to promote our successes externally and tell people what we are doing and our plans for the future.

The day's events will be centred round the Commissioning Service of our new English President, Hazel Crompton. The service will take place at 11am in St Martin in the Bull Ring, in central Birmingham, followed by lunch and organised activities in the afternoon for the girls and young women who attend. We have

invited the Bishop of Aston, the Right Reverend Andrew Watson, to officiate at the Commissioning Service, and one of the finalists from last year's 'Great British Bake Off', Brendan Lynch, will be judging the baking entries.

A principal aim of the day is to raise our profile, so we want to invite those people and organisations who have supported us over the years, as well as other locally influential people. We want to give everyone the chance to meet some of the girls, young women, volunteers and staff to discuss how they can help – and what we and our young women are doing in the local community.

You can all become involved in some way, so look out for the emails and invites coming your way in the not too distant future – and do not forget to put the date in your diaries.

## GFS notable dates for 2013

22 June

**Board of Trustees meeting**

Head Office

12 August

**International Youth Day**

17 August

**Youth Work Committee**

Head Office

14 September

**Board of Trustees meeting**

Head Office

28 September

**GFS Celebration Event and English**

**President's Commissioning Service**

St Martin in the Bull Ring, Birmingham

5 October

**Midlands Area meeting**

Atherston branch

31 October

**Branch end of year financial**

**returns due**

9 November

**Western Area meeting**

Clevedon branch

23 November

**Board of Trustees meeting**

Head Office



The photo on the front cover shows Lulia Yemane (11) and Hayley Gerrard (15). Both enjoyed high ropes and climbing activities at Shadwell Basin outdoor activity centre, an Easter programme trip organised by GFS Islington. Photo by Krystal Donaldson

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