

Volunteering Takes Off!

Over the past two years we have charted the successful development of our volunteering project – Step Up in various editions of our Rock Report. It has been a source of immense satisfaction seeing how successful this project has been and the positive impact it has made on the lives of so many young people. Fortunately for us, this work has not gone unnoticed and in recognition of it we have been awarded funding from The Volunteer Action Fund (VAF) to do more.

This new work will develop 40 new volunteering opportunities for vulnerable young people over the next 12 months - across four partnership organisations. As well as helping to develop these roles, The Rock Trust will work with the partners to assist them to develop their own abilities to recruit, train and sustain vulnerable young people in volunteering roles – both now and in the future.

The first three organisations are The National Trust for Scotland, The Water of Leith Conservation Trust and Fresh Start. The fourth partner is West Lothian Council, who we will be supporting to develop a Nightstop service, which will provide respite accommodation to young homeless people (for a maximum of 7 nights), in a volunteer host's home.

We will be adding a number of new volunteering roles to our own organisation – creating openings in the administration and fundraising teams. We are particularly excited about this as they will help a number of young people to gain exactly the types of skills that are required in many workplaces.

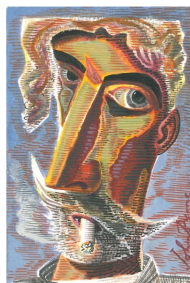
If you are interested in finding out more about becoming a Nightstop Host, please contact Emma Balfour on emma.balfour@rocktrust.org or Tel: 0131 557 4059.

Pictures and Painters and Marathon Makers

We would like to say a massive thank you to everyone who helped make this years postcard art exhibition and sale such a success – contributing artists, The Traverse Theatre, The RBS Group, The Foodie Company and everyone else who volunteered time, energy and enthusiasm to it. It is still too early to give a definitive final figure for sums raised, but we are currently just under the £13,000 mark which we are very happy with. We will look to run a follow up event in the of Spring of 2013 so if you have artistic talents or you know of those who do, please do let us (and them) know!



The month of May saw us collide full on with the athletics world as supporters reached for their energy bars, trainers and water bottles to take to the streets to run for our young people. We were delighted that teams and individuals chose to run for us in both the Glasgow Womens' 10K run (from the Mickel Fund) and the Edinburgh Marathon. Well done and thanks to everyone for their time and energy!



20th year moving to 21st year

You'll see from the logo on the top of this Rock Report that 2011 is an important year for the Trust. It is now 20 years ago that the organisation was established – by the West End Council of Churches, in light of the very visible and growing issue of young people sleeping rough in the city cemeteries at that time.

We want to make the most of the year by celebrating our successes as well as looking boldly to the future. Our efforts of course are part of a wider push across the UK to eliminate homelessness from the fabric of our society. In recent times as improvements have been made to tackle the supply of affordable accommodation (which by no means is resolved) an increasing emphasis has been placed on work to prevent homelessness occurring in the first place. We have been heavily involved in this work and today many of the services that we provide have strong preventative strands running through them.

With your support we will continue to do the best we can for disadvantaged young people across the Lothians' (and beyond) – giving them hope for a brighter and more prosperous future. Thank you for your support.

Beyond Homelessness Research Update

This piece of research is investigating how effective Housing Support Services are at combating homelessness in Scotland. The Rock Trust has a vested interest in this work, providing as it does a number of such services across the Lothians.



The work is now approaching a crucial and exciting stage as we are about to begin the first round of 160 qualitative interviews. These will be conducted by service user researchers – who have now been recruited (along with their professional colleagues) across the four case study areas in West Dumbartonshire, Edinburgh, Highlands and Aberdeenshire. We are extremely pleased with the calibre of these researchers – who all show a great attitude and aptitude for the work.

All of the researchers met at Strathclyde University in May for a two day training workshop. The sessions were very productive and helped to develop the key skills that will be required by them for the work. They also provided an opportunity for everyone to get to know one another. Since then, a follow up training session has taken place in each of the four case study areas.

We are now in the process of targeting relevant people to be interviewed - individuals who are either at risk of homelessness or have recently become homeless. Locating participants has been made distinctly easier with the help received from the participating local authorities Housing and Homelessness departments and their third sector partners. We expect the interviews to commence in mid June and all of our researchers are very much looking forward to the work beginning. We will of course bring you further news as the year progresses.

Moving in the Right Direction



In the coming months we will be marking a slight change in the direction of some of our support services.

Often when funding comes to an end there can be a lot of negative fallout – with established projects closing and vital services being lost to the community. There is however an upside to the challenge – in that it gives organisations a chance to review what they do and to ask some pertinent questions – does this really work, how could we make it better, what is the natural development of this project/piece of work? At these defining moments it is often those organisations that ask the

hard questions that are better placed to adapt and survive.

We have recently come through such a process ourselves – the results of which will alter the future bearing that our youth development services take. Rather than having three separate projects operating under one roof we will be moving to an integrated service – one that is more joined up and which will allow each young person to form a main relationship with one worker who can support them across a range of support activities (rather than having lots of different ones). We know from experience that this continuity of relationship is a key factor in working successfully with individuals who have lived a life where unstable relationships are often the norm.

The new 'Compass' Project will be run by staff with broader remits who will provide drop-in services, 1:1 support, mediation and volunteering opportunities. The project will aim to support young people to become financially literate, better able to sustain their tenancies, enter employment, education or training as well as becoming more confident and able to interact positively with others. Funded by the Big Lottery, the beneficiaries will be Edinburgh based young people who are experiencing homelessness or have an offending or care background.

The Compass Project will be **launched** at the **Underground Café**, 55 Albany Street, Edinburgh, EH1 3QY on the **11th July at 2pm**. We would be delighted if any supporter would like to come along and find out more. Please RSVP by 7th July on 0131 557 4059 so that we can make sure we have enough drinks and nibbles for everyone.

Supported by



Following In The Footsteps of John Muir - May 2011

During the month of May we were delighted to be able to run a group focused on the development of outdoor and conservation skills.

The work was run in partnership with Mid Lothian Council and a range of local and national conservation organisations.

The programme which lasted a week was packed with many wonderful activities started with the felling of (diseased and damaged) trees and pond conservation work at Springfield Mill. Keen to demonstrate their recycling credentials the group passed on the cut



timber to local elderly residents for firewood. Later that same day the group embarked on setting up a low impact campsite for the night and spent some time making and releasing Chinese lanterns into the night sky!

Other days saw the group visit John Muir's birthplace (and museum) in Dunbar and complete a stretch of the John Muir Walkway. They also visited the Holyrood Park Education Centre – where they learned more about the local geology, climbed Arthur's Seat and produced a sound map of the surrounding area.



The week culminated in a series of presentations where the young people spoke about their experiences during the week and their reflections of the Muir legacy and its relevancy in today's world – all to a packed and interested audience!

Over the week the young people worked with enthusiasm and passion and there was a clear team spirit amongst them. As well as benefiting from an extremely positive experience, they were all rewarded for their efforts by gaining the John Muir Discovery Award.

The work has been so successful that we are already progressing plans to repeat the exercise with a new group of young people in the second half of this year.

Housing Support Services Get The Thumbs Up From The People That Matter

Every year we spend time listening to the views of young people across our services – to find out how we are doing and where we can improve things. We have recently just completed such an exercise with young people using our Housing Support Services in Edinburgh and West Lothian.

First of all we were delighted by the response rate – with over 70% of the services young people motivated to take part. Overall they told us that they were very happy with the support that we provide – with 86% of respondents rating the service at or above 9/10.

One young person, Cassy, said *'I wouldn't be where I am today without The Rock Trust's support. I was scared at first, but my support worker helped me to feel safer. The staff make me feel happy and smile. They are always calm which makes me feel calm. I don't need to complain because everyone has been so good'*.

Of course, there are always things to learn and we are in the process of setting up a small group to work through the finer details and to recommend improvement actions. A couple of young people will join this group and contribute to the work – making the whole process from start to end as meaningful and relevant to them as possible.

