

Westgarth Activity Scheme reaps rewards for young people

A group of young people from Kirkby Stephen have been rewarded with a trip to Diggerland for their work as part of the The Westgarth Activity Scheme which was set up last May by the Eden Housing Association (EHA). Their goal was to encourage young people to contribute to their community, become more involved and improve relationships between young and older people. The scheme has become very popular with young people from in and around the Westgarth estate and the increased level of interaction in the community is just one measure of its success.

The activity scheme focuses on encouraging young people to take part in a wide range of activities which includes litter picking, creating hanging basket, car washes and cookery lessons. Open to young people under 16, they gather points as rewards which are collected towards special treats which the group collectively agree on.

Sarah Bowman from EHA Community Development Team has been involved with all the events so far, she recognises that “whilst the driving force to initiate the scheme was from EHA, it is the help from residents in the community and support groups like Eden Youth Work Partnership, Supported Housing and PCSO’s that has helped the project grow in strength.”

One of the first activities to be carried out by the group was an estate litter pick, this was a popular activity and two more have since been carried out, but it is the opportunity to learn new skills and mix with their local community that has inspired many to participate.

Last spring the scheme received funding from EHA and the Upper Eden Neighbour Forum to help create hanging baskets which were displayed as part of Kirkby Stephen’s entry for Cumbria in Bloom. Young people worked with members of ‘Kirkby Stephen in Bloom’ and Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) to create 50 hanging baskets. Sarah Bowman said “Those who took part gained practical gardening skills and had a hanging basket to take home - they also made a second hanging basket for an older resident in the community – taking great delight in delivering to neighbours and grandparents.”

The intergenerational cookery classes gave young people chance to learn new skills from older people in the community. At Christmas the residents of Mill Gardens Supported Housing Scheme helped the youngsters make Christmas cakes. “It is a brilliant example of what can be achieved when young people and partnership working is put into practice.”



Above: Intergenerational cookery classes, hanging basket preparation and litter picking: all activities turn into points for their reward.

Continued overleaf

All these activities helped mount up the points which were redeemed in part for a special adventure, chosen as a group - a trip to Diggerland in Durham. Sarah Bowman organised the event which saw 51 people set off on a specially arranged coach. The trip was for the young people who had worked hard on projects since last May and included children from the ages of 3 - 16 as well as adult supervisors and parents.

Sarah said "It was a great day out and there was a real community spirit. We got lots of feedback on the way home and know that several of the children made new friends. The adults very much appreciated the opportunities being given to their children. It has made everyone even more determined to do more this spring and summer and we are already planning the next set of activities. It is an excellent way to encourage younger residents to become part of their community and we are pleased at the success so far."

Anyone interested in finding out more about the Westgarth Activity Scheme should contact Sarah Bowman, Community Development Officer at Eden Housing Association by phoning 01768 861417 or e-mail sarah.bowman@edenha.org.uk

For more information or high res pictures contact Tracey Errington at Market Sense on 07799 640 290 or email: tracey@marketsense.net

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Picture: Some of the Children from Westgarth Estate who enjoyed their reward to Diggerland in Durham

Notes to the Editor:

Eden Housing Association is an established Registered Social Landlord providing over 1500 homes for affordable rental in the Cumbria districts of Eden, rural Carlisle and Allerdale. We provide a range of accommodation and services to meet the needs of young single persons, couples, families, older persons and the homeless, including specialist provision with support.

We are keen to grow and to offer our products to a wider audience in Cumbria with a continuing emphasis on market towns and rural areas, supporting their growth and sustainability. Our new website has up to date information and can be visited at www.edenha.org.uk