

Snakes Alive!

Britain's teenagers are among the most badly behaved in Europe, read recent headlines. But one local teen gave 4 weeks of his summer holiday to help poor people in The Gambia, West Africa.

"We went there to help with the building of a school, and to work with young people," said Alex Seymour of Sunnyvale Drive, as he reflected on one of the most remarkable months of his life.

"I remember getting off the plane in Banjul (The Gambia's capital), and being met by heat, humidity and hawkers." The guesthouse they first stayed in lacked creature comforts, but it was a five-star hotel compared with the huts they would be staying in.

In a village outside Farafenni, the team of 9 teenagers and 4 leaders shared 3 rooms while they



helped decorate school buildings. They'd gone as a group with the Christian organisation, Crusoe, also taking money, raised by last year's team, to help towards buying land for the building of a community centre.

The most striking experience for Alex was not the heat, poverty, corruption, large insects, or even warnings against snakes. The 'biggest thing' he got from going to The Gambia was the near miracle of 13 strangers coming together from across the UK to form a team - living together for a

whole month, in a new and strange place, and never falling out once. It was the openness between members, the sense of purpose they shared.

"Where next?" I asked Alex, thinking he would likely name some exotic holiday resort. "I'd like to go back and see how things are progressing with the centre there."

Carol Service

6.30 pm - Saturday 23rd Dec

Christmas Praise

10 am - Christmas Day

At: Longwell Green School
Ellacombe Road

21st Century

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5-star

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News in Brief

You may have seen John-Mark Molyneux (the new community worker funded by the Mustard Tree). He has been supporting Coffee Tots, the Mums and toddlers group, every



Tuesday morning. He's enjoyed telling stories in assemblies, & chatting to the over 50's in Golden Blend, he even got them doing a quiz.

And watch out, he's sometimes got a camera!

We're on the Web
www.themustardtree.com

Faith Matters

Do you have questions about God and faith? Would you like to believe but are not sure how? Would you be interested in exploring faith in a discussion group? **Please get in touch.** We are hoping to start up such a group in the new year. Details to be confirmed, but initially meeting for just 6 weeks.

Email John Mark:

johnmark@themustardtree.com or
call/text him: 07868 707 913

*'wise men came to Jesus,
The wise still do...'*

From a poem by Sue Dean of Stanhope Rd

The last word

My interest is in the future
because I am going to spend
the rest of my life there. Anon.

Big Splash!

Sixteen young people got to grips with kayaks and paddles in the Saltford Shallows, on the river Avon in October. Most managed to get into their kayaks and stay dry for a most of the time, but in the end playing 'dodge ball' saw quite a few ended up soaked.



Paul McCarthy of Redwood Close took them through the basics of paddling, balancing

and manoeuvring. But he said, "There were a few 'swimmers' that day. Like leaders Alan and Russell who capsized without any assistance".

*Heads, shoulders,
knees and toes!*

Sarah said, "The funniest bit was when we all rafted together and Hollie stood

up on her kayak and sang 'head and shoulders, knees and toes...' with the actions."

Running For Life

At 5 miles into the Bristol half-marathon, Suzanne Bray of Longbeach Rd nearly gave up with a painful knee. But, together with running partner Sue Lucas (our Longwell Green vet), they changed the pace and kept going. Both agreed they would never have done this without the other.

Suzanne, who had always lagged behind in cross-country running at school, was struck by how, when you put your mind to it, you can do anything (with a little help from your friends).

*It's not just about exercise... it's about
friendship, listening and putting the
world to rights.*

They had begun by just running together, but soon realised they



were running for over an hour, then Sue suggested the half marathon. 'But it's not just about exercise. It's fun!' exclaimed Sue. And the times they run together give them the chance to talk about life, family and even faith.

21st Century Church

It is a Sunday morning at Longwell Green Primary School. Children are telling stories in a bedouin tent, people are moulding play dough to resemble something that has helped them in their faith, others are watching a slide show and reflecting on what the images mean to them. But where is church?

Someone writes down a confession on a piece of paper, crumples it up, and adds it to a growing pile of confessions. Another draws a picture of the Bible on an arrow shaped Post-it as a way of symbolising what has guided him in his faith journey.

Dave Wiles, CEO of Frontier Youth Trust, has masterminded this 'all-age' service. People of all ages are going to different stalls, each designed to help



them reflect on their journey of faith. Dave says, "The only Christians who scare me are those who think they have arrived. Faith is a journey, because it is about following someone—namely Jesus."

"Faith is a journey..."

"Do you see yourself as being on a journey?" I asked Steve

Bellamy of Bath Rd. He smiled back at me and said, "I was an atheist for 27 years. The day after I became a Christian, someone took me to church. The leader said to me, 'You're going to be a leader in the church one day.' I didn't take too much notice at the time," he said. Steve is now on the leadership team of the Mustard Tree Community Church.

"I was an atheist for 27 years..."

It seems we are all on a journey. Church is the coming together of people, of all ages, to support, inspire and share this journey. It is not all singing and sermons, it is all about recognising and responding to God, and making time to share this journey with others.

Light Fantastic!

It was a dark, cold, damp night, but at the Mustard Tree in Watsons Road three fun-packed, back to back, light fantastic parties were in full swing.

The first saw over thirty 5-7 year olds, screaming with delight in the parachute game, scoffing down treats, then sitting in a circle, captured by a jungle story. The second was a mixture of songs and party games and

of course, more food, for 8-12 year olds.

"We want to offer a fun, light-filled alternative to Halloween," said community worker, John-Mark Molyneux, "where

the children have a great time, and parents can rest assured."

The last party was fancy dress (no witches or ghosts!) for 30 teenagers who came dressed imaginatively and had a great time.

"We want to offer a fun, light-filled alternative..."



5-star celebration!

Fifty mums of current and former Footprints children came to celebrate the 5th anniversary of the preschool with founder Jayne Bray and her team. This Ladies Night at the Mustard Tree was a good time to meet up with old friends over wine and nibbles, served by 3 men from the church - dressed in black tie.

The large turn-out to the party said something about what Footprints has meant to the

mums. Only 6 had not made it. Many had seen all their children go through Footprints.



"Each child is part of a family"

"We see each child as part of a family," explained Jayne, "so it is also about supporting parents, and involving them."

Each mum comes in to Footprints to help out, and there are reviews with parents about their children's progress.

Footprints is held in the Mustard Tree building on Watsons Road.

The church was able to pledge money to pay for a one-to-one worker, Helen.



Helen has been working with James and his special physical needs. Karen, his mum, said "Footprints has been a big part of James' development. He does not need a one-to-one helper any more, his progress has been quite remarkable." Karen was one of the first at the 5 year celebration.

Ofsted Success



Jayne and her team have just returned from an Early Years conference as part of their on-going training and development. Ofsted has evaluated the group as 'Good', but Jayne doesn't see that as any reason for complacency.



You are warmly invited to...

The Mustard Tree
Community Church

The United Church,
Bath Road



Carol Service Saturday
23rd December 6.30pm
at Longwell Green
Primary School

Christmas Day - 10am
at Longwell Green
Primary School



Christmas Eve
Crib Service — 4pm
Communion — 11pm
Christmas Day — 10am
informal communion
Boxing Day — 10am