

The Don McMath Foundation Newsletter – 7th October 2014

The Don McMath Foundation



Charity number: 1100164

76 Manor Road, Verwood, Dorset, BH31 6EA

Telephone: 01202 823317 Email: info@donmcmath.org Web site www.donmcmath.org

Hi All



FUNDRAISING

The Verwood Garden Party took place on Sunday 3rd August 2014. The format was slightly different from usual as we served a ploughman's lunch instead of hot food. The work involved in cooking for in excess of 100 people was finally getting to us! This year we limited the numbers to about 60 and for the first time Judy, Mick and Anne were able to get round and actually talk to people rather than rushing round preparing



and serving food. Anne brought her British Empire Medal and talked to people about the medal ceremony and the Royal Garden Party. Including £750 from Barclays Matching Fundraising we raised £1,655.70.

On Bank Holiday Monday 25th August at the Verwood Rustic Fayre Judy and Mick ran their usual stall with Hook a Duck and Lucky Dip for children. Unfortunately it rained heavily all day so not many people turned up (about 400 compared to more than 4,000 last year) and they only made £101.24 mainly due to the generous gift of a £30 voucher from local restaurant Al Trullo from which we made £84.



Led by his good friend Malcolm Thacker, Andy Davey has once again had one of his epic walks. This time across Devon. Including Gift Aid they managed to raise a



magnificent £1,442.50. Three years on from their 13 day 200+ mile walk across the North of England, Andy and Malcolm once again donned their walking boots to raise money for the school. This time they walked across Devon 'Coast to coast' - from Wembury in the South to Lynmouth in the North. 117 miles in 6 days across the wilds of Dartmoor and Exmoor, and through the birthplace of Andy's Mum's Father at Witheridge. They met some fantastic people, stayed in some great places and were very taken with the hospitality shown. They recommend

Devon as a place to visit and explore.

All the money raised from our fundraising events has been used to buy new tables and chairs for Primary Grade 3 and 4 and Upper Basic 7 and 8 this will replace the old wooden desks. Many thanks to Steve Gotting for his help with the purchasing and shipping.

If you are thinking of holding a fund raising event for the charity, we would love to hear from you.

THE SCHOOL

Everything is moving on smoothly at the school which went back on 18th September. The dates for the new school year are: Winter Term 18 September to 19 December, Spring Term 5 January to 28 March, Summer Term 13 April to 16 July.

Graduation



In June 2014 a graduation ceremony was held for the former Grade 9 and the then present Grade 9. The Head of Nusrat was asked to be the speaker but was unable to attend so sent a representative. Mr P. A. Secka, our Education Dept. monitor was also a guest as well as the graduates' parents. Mr Jeng, the



headmaster borrowed graduation gowns from S O S school and with the staff organised the ceremony. Lower & Upper Basic provided entertainment in the form of a singing programme and a couple of very funny sketches which were appreciated by all who attended. After the speeches the graduates received certificates and a small gift. Refreshments were served to the guests, graduates and parents and it was a chance to catch up with our former students. Amongst the girls, there seemed to be a competition to who could wear the highest shoes, but Anne noted that many left the school in bare feet, carrying the shoes.

Mick and Judy have booked to come out to The Gambia in December when they will be taking all the new class photos which hopefully will be sent out to sponsors before Christmas.

Each year we are oversubscribed for places at the school, so Anne goes and visits the families and tries to take those children that are most in need. (i.e. the families who are too poor to afford to send their children to school.) However she has no way of assessing the children's level of intelligence. We have found on several occasions that, after the child has started at school, they have learning difficulties. Though we have physically disabled children at the school, we do not have the skills or resources to deal with children with severe learning difficulties.

We thought it might be helpful to set out our criteria for children's process in the school.

Nursery pupils:

If we identify a child with severe learning difficulties we let them stay in the school for a year and inform their parents. After the year if there is no improvement, the children leave or if we are unsure we will let them repeat. Unfortunately we cannot let them stay longer as they take up a place of a new intake.

Grade 1 – 6:

From Nursery the children proceed to Lower Basic. They move up a class each year unless they have done really badly and have to repeat the class. However if a child is doing very well consistently in Nursery and Grade 1 we will fast-track them up a class. e.g. a Nursery 3 pupil could go straight to Primary 2. We do not fast track anyone higher than Primary 3. At Grade 6 children have to pass the exams before they go to Upper Basic, as they go from having 4 main subjects to 9 subjects in Upper Basic.

They get two chances at this, if they don't pass the first year they have to repeat it. Many of the children who repeat manage to pass the second time, but unfortunately there are always a couple who do not and leave.

Grade 7 – 9:

This is our Upper basic pupils who do a three year course in 9 subjects.

Grade 9 pupils:

Each year our Grade 9 pupils sit National exams which are similar to our GCSE's. The exams are given a grade 1-9, one being the highest mark.

The marks from the core subjects (English, Maths, Science and Social & Environmental Studies) and the pupils two best other subjects are added and this gives the pupil their aggregate mark. The highest mark they can get is 6 and the lowest mark is 54.

It was decided that if any of our pupils could get high enough marks we would continue to sponsor them at Senior School to do their equivalent of "A" levels. Several schools were visited and it was decided that the best school in our area was NUSRAT. It has higher criteria than some other schools, but obtains good results, though it cost around £120 per year for a 3 year course. The pupil needs to get an aggregate of 20 - 24 to get a place.

Last year 11 of our pupils got a place and now are in their 2nd year at NUSRAT. This year 5 pupils have obtained a place. Although some of the children with results between 25 and 27, just below the criteria for senior school, were offered the chance to repeat year 9 in all these cases the parents have withdrawn their children (all aged 16 or 17) from the school to allow them to seek work. They have all left with at least the equivalent of a GCSE level education.

DONATIONS

Thanks to the new sponsors who have signed up over the last few months we always need more! With the new intake in September and with a few sponsors dropping out we now have about 47 children needing sponsors. Please pass this on to anyone you think might like to sponsor a child, as Anne has mentioned in the past "£5 a month is only the cost of a bottle of wine!"

Please note the website address: www.donmcmath.org and the email address: info@donmcmath.org. You can also reach Anne and Mick via: anne@donmcmath.org and mick@donmcmath.org.

If anyone who currently receives this newsletter through the post is now on email could you please let us know your address so we can email you future newsletters as this will cut down considerably on our costs.

Thank you all for your support.

Anne, Judy and Mick McMath – October 2014