

PTA Report 2013/14

Rosie Donaldson & Helga Hill

Rather than present to you an overly formal report I thought I'd share some reflections and thoughts on the past PTA year with you.

This time last year when I came to the information evening I was uninitiated into what I imagined were... the mysterious ways of the PTA.... I came with pre-conceptions.... that PTAs were the domain of the pushy, power Mums, yummy mummy types with too much time on their hands who fuss over flower arrangements..... the past year has shown me that my notions were mere clichés and prejudices which were not based on reality.

By contrast our committee last year was a friendly, energetic and eclectic collection of Mums (and a Dad!!!) – many of whom have stressful and demanding jobs – both part time and full time, some of whom were on maternity leave, some were stay at home parents, some with their own businesses, some doing the school run every day, others seldom – all with “stuff” going on in their lives – stress, difficulties, bereavements, house moves and even 2 PTA babies were born! Some had years of PTA involvement under their belt whilst others were completely new. We were a diverse, stretched group – so what motivated us to get involved in such a tangible way in the life of Greenwood?

It was obvious from the start that we wanted to enhance the experience of every family connected to the school. We wanted all our parents to feel connected with each other, to feel part of the school community and to feel that the PTA was their PTA and existed not in a self serving cliquy way but as an entry point for any one of them to get involved in the life of the school and ‘to give something back’.

Other values began to emerge throughout the year also. We tried to listen to parents. They told us they would prefer our events to be as cheap as we could make them – so putting on affordable events also became a focus of our year. It was a balancing act as on one hand we wanted to raise money for the school and charities, but we didn't want to be insensitive to the real economic circumstances of our families. I would imagine that this issue will continue to require wisdom as the years go on.

We tried to create an arena where committee members could bring to reality ideas and passions that were in keeping with our values – and so for example Kirsty and Christine's eco stall, selling buns for Judith's autism charity, Kirsty's fair-trade chocolate, Helga's 'spring fling', Christine's, what started as a P3 and then turned into whole school souvenir tea towel...

We also tried to give help to families. When one family was having a very difficult time the PTA and many others swung into action providing meals in the summer term which was hugely appreciated. This arm of PTA activity could perhaps be developed and honed in the future?

Many of us got involved in the PTA to connect, network and make friends. For those of us who are rarely at the school for drop offs and pick ups – it is an excellent way to get to know other parents and 'get the inside track'. I can honestly say I have made brilliant friends this year who have enhanced my life. The craic has been brilliant – some of my personal highlights have been - the crazy Halloween party, out for a few drinks after, setting up events

with my own kids, selling innumerable cups of tea and coffee at the Christmas performances, enjoying brilliant seats at the Opera house pantomime, good chats over counting and bagging money in the staffroom, the salvation army band at the Christmas fair, dancing at the spring fling and the absolute classic – a load of us (including Mrs Harper) going down that bouncy castle slide at the Summer BBQ!!!!!!

Helga was a brilliant co-chair to work with – an enthusiast, a dreamer, a believer in the art of the possible – thank you! I've loved working with you. To the whole committee last year – you pulled your weight, collaborated, supported, encouraged, turned up, took responsibility, replied to emails, gave your time - and collectively you made 2013/14 a great year for our PTA. Mrs Harper has been amazingly supportive, patient and encouraging this year also – We could not operate without her hands on help and direction - so to her and her staff we need to give a massive thanks for putting up with us cackling in the staffroom, asking many probably stupid questions, working with us - putting notes in bags, promoting our events, letting us use their classrooms and in many other ways.

To those of you who are unsure whether to get involved this year – I would say “Do it!!”. Whatever time you can give, the PTA can use. Maybe you can be around for the odd morning, or at pick up time, maybe you can give evenings, or 15 mins before you go to work, or are happy to undertake a task in your home late at night, or maybe you want to be added to an email list where you're kept informed of events and requests for help – we would be delighted for you to join our PTA family here in Greenwood.