



SUMMER NEWSLETTER

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS!

Over the last 15 years The Friendship Circle has given us, hundreds of volunteers, and friends the opportunity to experience and learn from the diversity and beauty of people with all abilities. What started out as a couple of events a month for a handful of members and a few volunteers has grown beyond all recognition.

Actively benefitting over 160 members with a calendar jam-packed with colour, excitement, and opportunity, we have a thriving one-to-one buddy scheme, a growing teens division and a range of skills-based programmes helping members advocate for themselves and supporting them into training and employment. The Friendship Circle are creating a community, where people of all abilities experience respect, acceptance, and inclusion.

We would love it if you would join us at our '15 years of Friendship' Dinner on November 23rd to celebrate this momentous occasion.

To book your place or take an advert in our souvenir programme please contact Beverley Rubin on 07771 800001 or beverley@friendshipcircle.co.uk

SPEAKING OUT CELEBRATIONS

A Sefer Torah is only complete when all its letters are included. Each letter must be perfect, otherwise the whole scroll is not kosher to use. We learn that each person is compared to a letter in the Sefer Torah, each person matters equally, and each person needs to be given the opportunity to communicate and be heard equally, otherwise we, as a people are not complete.

This is the premise of the ground-breaking **Speaking Out Forum** which aims to give people with disabilities and learning difficulties a voice, through public speaking training.

It was a truly inspiring evening when our second cohort of eleven Friendship Circle members, assisted by mentors, completed the ten-part course with a wonderful celebration event at Manchester Central Library, in front of an audience of 75 family and friends, including MP Christian Wakeford. All the participants received a certificate and a medal and mentors were presented with certificates of appreciation.



MY FATHER'S STORY

Friendship Circle Patron Stuart Ferster came to The Friendship Circle on Yom Hashoah to talk to our members about how his father survived the horrors of the Holocaust.

'On Yom Hashoah I was privileged to speak to 25 members of The Friendship Circle about the journey of my father, Chaim Ferster during WW11. You could hear a pin drop! I have only just started telling my father's story under the Northern Holocaust Education Group who have mentored me and helped me put together a powerful PowerPoint presentation. NHEG under the wonderful leadership of Ernie Hunter, train second/ third generation survivors to tell their parents and grandparents' story. I have spoken in schools and universities and have been well received with a few questions here and there. Last night in front of these wonderful 25 young adults I was blown away with the quality of their questions.

"How did the German's know who was Jewish?"

"What would have happened to people like us?"

"Where did the word Holocaust come from?"

We are blessed to have such a wonderful organisation like The Friendship Circle in our community and they should be supported.'



FESTIVAL FUN

Yom Tov is always a special time for celebrating with family and friends. At The Friendship Circle we make sure that our members have the opportunity to observe the mitzvot of each festival and celebrate with friends around them.

The legendary Yom Tov packs that we put together bring a delivery of joy and friendship to the home of all our members, ensuring the excitement of the upcoming festival is felt by all. Highlights included dressing up at Purim, decorating Matzah covers for Pesach, partying at Lag B'Omer and flower arranging at Shavuot.

CHATTING TO THE CHIEF RABBI

It was a very special afternoon when Chief Rabbi Mirvis, an honorary Patron of The Friendship Circle, mingled and chatted with over 80 members, volunteers and staff over a splendid afternoon tea, held in his honour. "There's one place I'd love to go to and that's The Friendship Circle. You are all amazing, wonderful people within the Jewish community. You are among the best we've got!"

HEBREW READING GRADUATES

The end of the first stage of the Hebrew reading course culminated in a wonderful Siddur presentation from Rabbi Eisenberg, where he congratulated each member who had taken part, and presented them with their own siddur and a certificate recognising their incredible achievement. Members have spent the last 8 months learning the Alef Bet, which for many was the first time they had been given the opportunity to learn Hebrew. They will now commence the next stage of the course encouraging them to further connect to their Jewish heritage and observance.



RUNNING FOR FRIENDSHIP

This year's 2023 Great Manchester Run was that extra bit special, as not only did it mark the 15th anniversary of The Friendship Circle, but it was also the 20th anniversary of the Run itself!

Tens of thousands took part in the iconic race on the hottest day of the year, including a total of 55 people between the ages of 5 – 60, who ran on behalf of The Friendship Circle. The group raised a staggering total of £17,358 between them, with teams from Stenecourt Chesed Club and Quooker UK, led by Friendship Circle Patron Stephen Johnson, taking part and fundraising for the charity.

We were overwhelmed by the number of runners we had taking part and fundraising for us this year. A hybrid of school children, volunteers, members, patrons and donors, all came together to support The Friendship Circle. We are beyond proud of each and every one of our members who challenged themselves to reach the finish line.



FZY CHALLAH BAKE

FZY Manchester Hadracha Aleph youth leadership organised a Challah Bake raising £1,300 for The Friendship Circle.

The group were thrown in at the deep end and asked to organise a fundraising event without any experience in doing this type of thing before.

Orly Cohen, one of the participants, stated, "We chose to raise money for The Friendship Circle because it was a local charity and we personally know people The Friendship Circle has helped by giving them a community which has made such a big difference to them"

We were truly inspired by everyone's drive and passion to make the evening a success. As well as organising a wonderful event, the girls raised a substantial amount of money for us which will fund our next day trip.



ERIN'S CYCLE CHALLENGE

Year 6 North Cheshire Jewish Primary School pupil Erin Goldthorpe took on a challenge to raise money for The Friendship Circle as part of our 15-Year Anniversary Schools Fundraising Campaign.

11-year-old Erin cycled a 15km route around Cheadle, Cheadle Hulme, Handforth Dean and Wythenshawe Park and raised £175 for the charity!

'I remember when The Friendship Circle came to school a few years ago and we all did art together in my class. My cousin has learning disabilities and because of this I know that there are different kinds of disabilities and the importance of always making sure you are inclusive to everyone.'



ARI - OUR VERY OWN MARATHON MAN!

Ari Craimer recently completed the Manchester Marathon in just 4 hours, 8 minutes and 6 seconds to raise money for The Friendship Circle.

In the last 2 years Ari has run two Manchester Full Marathons (in April 2022 and April 2023) as well as the Manchester Half Marathons (in October 2021 and 2022), raising over £5,500 for the charity.

However, Ari has no intention of stopping there! He is continuing to challenge himself and intends to take on the Manchester Half Marathon again in October 2023. 'I'm fundraising for The Friendship Circle as it's an amazing charity'.



WE WALKED TO WALES!

Thanks to a generous £2,000 grant from Salford CVS, The Friendship Circle launched a fun and friendly virtual WALK TO WALES challenge, to inspire members to get outdoors in the fresh air over the winter months.

Equipped with hot drinks, great conversation, and their own pedometer! the group met fortnightly rain or shine in Heaton Park to collectively walk the 200-mile journey to Wales.

It didn't take long for the motivated group to achieve the virtual visit, and they celebrated with a well-deserved Welsh themed party.

We are incredibly proud of everyone for putting in the extra effort throughout the dark winter months. Despite the cold and the rain, the intrepid group covered a total of 400 miles, so technically they walked to Wales....and back again!



MACCABI THUNDERS TAKE ON EUROPE!

Maccabi Thunders, The Friendship Circle's talented all abilities football team, were invited to take part in the Special Champions League football tournament in Lisbon. 12 international teams participated in this unique event at the SL Beneficia training ground, promoting greater social inclusion within European Football for people with disabilities.

The ten strong team, who train weekly at Maccabi Community Centre with professional coaches from Salford City's Foundation '92, travelled to Lisbon for two nights. After a long day at the tournament playing against Germany, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK, the team went on to enjoy a delicious kosher meal at the characterful beer factory. The following day they managed to make time for a novel Tuk-Tuk tour of the historic city, before returning to Manchester that evening.

Even though the teams didn't speak the same language, they played the same game, and the smiles and high fives of congratulations were understood by everyone! Every single player pulled together and showed outstanding teamwork throughout the tournament.

Ed Sholem who took part in the tournament commented, 'It was such a great experience for us to play against other teams from so many different countries. I loved every bit of the trip and I'll never forget it.'

Back on home soil, Maccabi Thunders were invited to attend a local professional football game at Salford City's Peninsular Stadium, where they were proudly presented with medals of achievement. It was a privilege for everyone involved to witness such a wonderful celebration of ability and see how far the team have come.



TEEN SCENE

In addition to the weekly 'chill out' sessions held at The Friendship Circle office, nights out at the cinema, wall climbing, trampolining, and bowling are all regular activities at Teen Club. Parents have commented that the boys feel 'Teen Club is a safe space for them to be themselves and for many this is the highlight of their week.' The ever-growing group of around 22 boys between the ages of 12 - 18 love taking part in a game of table football, playing board games, doing jigsaws or just chatting together and enjoying each other's company.

Since Teen Club started 4 years ago the boys have grown together and formed a camaraderie, becoming a close, tight knit group of friends. Watch this space for Girls Teen Club which is being launched later this year.



AWESOME DAYS OUT

Summer wouldn't be summer without fun days out with friends. At the start of this year we visited the Lake District where we enjoyed a boat ride across Windermere taking in the stunning views, before travelling back in time on a steam train on the Lakeside & Haverthwaite heritage railway. We topped off the day with a visit to Bowness and a trip to the Lakes Aquarium, where we walked through an incredible underwater tunnel to view one of the largest collections of freshwater fish in the UK.

Blackpool Pleasure beach is another all-time favourite with The Friendship Circle. There was something for everyone to enjoy, from leisurely water rides through river caves to adrenaline charged roller coasters, we had the time of our lives! We can't wait to visit North Wales and Blackpool Zoo planned for later this year.



FRIENDSHIP'S IN FASHION!

Over 400 people attended the unforgettable 'Be Beautiful, Be Yourself' Fashion Show at the Hilton Suite, which raised £75,000 over 2 nights! The show kicked off with an outstanding performance by The Friendship Circle Drummers and the evening was compered by Elliot Sayers who also treated everyone to a pitch perfect rendition of 'That's Life'.

The models, undoubtedly the stars of the show, wore clothes from Whispering Smith and N Brown who were the main sponsors of the event. They received a well-deserved standing ovation as they paraded down the catwalk with style, enthusiasm, and pride.

The world is finally focussing on inclusivity and embracing diversity, boundaries The Friendship Circle has been pushing for the past 15 years.



SCHOOL'S WORKSHOP

Friendship Circle members have been involved in running workshops with year 4 & year 5 pupils at Broughton Jewish, King David, North Cheshire and Bury & Whitefield Primary Schools as part of The Friendship Circle's Disability Education Project.

During the 4-part sessions, the children were encouraged to think about disability and inclusion and learn the value of differences as well as challenging stereotypes. The children enjoyed writing postcards about inclusivity, drawing friendship flowers for the art project and creating recipes for their very own Friendship Circle Soup, including essential ingredients such as 'a teaspoon of kindness' and 'a cup of happiness'!

They were also asked to carry out 15 acts of kindness to commemorate The Friendship Circle's 15-year Anniversary. The highlight was the member's panel, where they had the chance to ask members personal questions about what it was like living with a disability.

This ground-breaking programme encourages children to be more accepting and think about important issues that individuals with disabilities are faced with, such as ways that their environment can be adapted to be more accessible.



WE'VE MOVED!

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