

Youth centre helps build relationships

BY CLAIRE SMYTH
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WORD-OF-MOUTH is how most young people who turn up at the Rendezvous find out about the Sherborne youth centre.

Located under the Cheap Street Church, the basement facilities, which include a recording studio, computer suites and cafe, offer a safe and welcoming place for young people between the ages of 13 and 25 to socialise, use the internet and study.

Sometimes people are referred to the centre, for example, from concerned teachers, or they might just turn up without being immediately forthcoming about any issues they may have.

Ingrid Trill, the centre's manager, said: "For a lot of people it's just a place to meet their friends, but then we will build a relationship with them and things can come out.

"It's surprising through conversation what comes out. They might just want to come in for a chat because not every young person has an issue but if they do feel they need to talk to somebody, there's someone here they can talk to."

Established in 1998, the Rendezvous is also an accredited exam centre and offers unique learning programmes in a range of subjects.

A total of 28 young people enrolled for the Pre-Entry to Employment programme (PreE2E) in 2010/2011 which included training in literacy, numeracy and food hygiene.

Funding for this ended in March 2011 and staff say it is greatly missed.

Leah Frank, 16, of Sherborne, came to the centre for further education after she did not receive the GCSE grades she hoped for.

She said: "I'm doing a learning course instead of going to college. It's more fun here, the

"I'd be lost if I didn't have the Rendezvous"

classes are smaller and it's a better atmosphere. We get more things done. It's better, and you get the help you need.

"I'd be lost if I didn't have the Rendezvous, and I know a lot of other kids would be too because there's nothing for us to do in the town."

Mrs Trill said it has been a difficult year financially due to the current economic climate and nationwide funding cuts.

She said: "As with a great number of charitable organisations, the general economic climate, the introduction of the spending review, subsequent



MUSIC SPACE: Stuart Moore, a studio worker at the Rendezvous centre in Sherborne, on the drum kit in the recording studio. Picture by Laura Jones WGLJ20111124E

cuts in budgets, the reductions in company profits which would otherwise be put towards their trust and foundations trusts, staying in business let alone being ahead of the game has proven to cause enormous headaches for all those concerned. We have all had to make sacrifices."

The six part-time staff at the

centre recently had their working hours reduced by ten per cent following a period when the charity had to dip into its reserves which resulted in a reduction of the centre's opening hours.

Whereas it used to be open all day from Monday to Friday, its doors open now from 1pm until 6pm every day except



MEETING PLACE: Bob Eccleshall, chairman of the Friends of the Rendezvous, chats to Lloyd Spiller, 19, and Brett Croft, 19, at the cafe area of the Sherborne youth centre. Below, Leah Frank and Jade Sherman, both aged 16.

Tuesday when it is open for a Friends of the Rendezvous coffee morning.

The Friends of the Rendezvous is made up of supporters of the youth centre who actively raise funds to keep the centre going.

Mrs Trill added: "We have turned the lives around of so many young people, helping them address the issues that have affected their every day lives and been barriers to their learning or obtaining meaningful employment.

"This could have been the smallest thing, to something more major such as becoming homeless.

"I believe we certainly make a difference. I am concerned as to where these young people who attend the Rendezvous would go if for any reason our service had to be cut further because of funding issues. The whole concept of the Rendezvous arose from just these concerns and it would most certainly be a retrograde step not to continue.

"The future is going to be hard, but all involved with the Rendezvous are determined to work equally hard to ensure



that the centre continues to offer the highest quality services for the young people of Sherborne and surrounding villages."

For more information about the centre, call the centre manager on 01935 814496, visit www.therendezvous.org.uk or email information@therendezvous.org.uk.



WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?
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What the Rendezvous means to us

A FORMER Sherborne schoolgirl who is recording a music album said she could never have done it without the help of the Rendezvous.

Alexandra Dulieu-Rayner, 20, from Lower Odcombe, was referred to the centre when she was 16 and a pupil at the Gryphon School.

It was here she discovered she had a talent for singing and, four years later, she has meetings with top music labels in the pipeline.

She said: "I was referred there by a member of staff at school. It was never about the music, that didn't come into it until three months later and it was by accident.

"They did karaoke at Christmas and I did a Whitney Houston song. After that they got me into the studio and said they were going to get me singing lessons, so it really took off from there."

Miss Dulieu-Rayner is now a branch manager of a bank but, despite loving her job, has decided to try her luck at singing.

She has recorded ten songs – some covers and some she has written herself – and has enlisted the help of a contact at Sony to perfect the recordings before she shows them to the label.

She added: "The Rendezvous was a fantastic opportunity for me. It's really boosted my confidence. I never would have had the opportunity to work in a stu-



SHINING STAR: Alexandra Dulieu-Rayner discovered her talent for singing at the Rendezvous. WGJB20111210D

dio, and I don't think I would have got the job in the bank.

"It's important not to forget those people that helped me. It would be arrogant for me to think I don't need them anymore because I would not be where I am without them. I always say if I make my millions I will give them lots."

KARL: Karl was still at school when he came to the Rendezvous. He had found it difficult to concentrate during his GCSEs due to personal issues.

He gained a level 1 in English at the centre and now works at Sherborne Castle Gardens with the intention of completing his level 1 in numeracy before progressing to level 2 in both subjects.

He said: "I like working at the Rendezvous because I find when I am here there are less distractions and it is up to me to get the work done."

TERIQUE: Terique had been out of work for eight months when he was advised to go to the Rendezvous.

He said: "I didn't really have anything going for me at the time. Until it was suggested I go to the Rendezvous when they supported me from start to end in getting a job that best suited me. Now I'm working full time at Bill Butters Doors and Windows where I am happy and feel I have a future."

CHER: The Rendezvous also provides support to young parents and young parents-to-be through the centre's Young Parents Group.

Cher was 17 and pregnant with her first child when she joined the group three years ago. Since then, she has had a second child and faced the possibility of homelessness. Luckily, the centre was able to provide support and help Cher solve her housing problems.

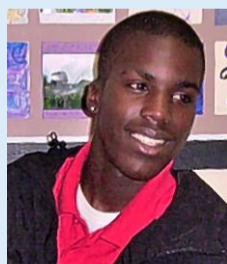
She moved into a house that she has made a home for her family, set up a part-time business in hair extensions and is due to marry her partner of six years next July.

Cher said: "I feel over the last year the group has provided me with advice and support whenever needed. I feel comfortable taking and confiding in Jem [a youth worker]. I always look forward to coming to the group every Wednesday."

The group meets every Wednesday between 1 and 3pm.



MAKING PROGRESS: Karl studies at the Rendezvous.



OPEN DOORS: Terique had been unemployed for eight months.



GRATEFUL MUM: Cher and her two children received help.

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