



Arainn Shuaineirt Youth Club Newsletter



January 2007 No. 1

Firstly we'd like to wish you all a very happy New Year for 2007. We hope that the newsletter will become a regular part of the Youth Club to let you know what we are up to and how you can help, if you have the time.

Background

Around 4 years ago, shortly after the Sunart Centre was opened, the Club was started by Sarah Madden, Ronnie Macintyre and Chris and June Ryan, with support from the Highland Council, mainly in the shape of Eoghan Carmichael. For a while all ages (8 - 18) attended together on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. With the growing popularity of the Club (sometimes 80+ in a session) and the complications of having such a wide age range, it was decided to split the Club into secondary school ages (S1 to S4) for Tuesday sessions (7.00 - 9.00 pm) and primary school ages (8 years plus) for Thursday sessions (6.30 - 8.30 pm).

Transport

Subsidised transport is provided for children living in Acharacle, Lochaline and Ardgour which is critical to the success of the Club, allowing kids from all over the area to use the facilities in the Sunart Centre and to get to know each other outside school time. The £1 that all the children pay each time they visit helps pay for this transport.

What goes on in Youth Club?

We tend to put on more organised activities for the younger kids such as craft, games and sports. Although craft is sometimes available for the older kids, as well as sports (e.g. football, badminton, basketball) many of them just love to 'hang out' together, chatting and listening to music. We feel that having a chance to get together in a relaxed, safe environment - outside school - is very important for the teenagers in the area.

Special events

As well as the usual activities, the Club puts on special events such as Halloween parties, 'Children in Need' evenings and 'Stars in Their Eyes' evenings. Staff recently receiving training to allow them to drive a minibus, so we have begun to organise

outing. The recent day trip to Murrayfield to watch the Scotland vs. Australia rugby international was a big success (despite the result) and another is planned in March (the Scotland vs. Ireland 6 Nations game).

Who runs the Youth Club?

As well as some Highland Council-paid Youth Workers the Club also relies on volunteers to ensure that it is able to run effectively. The current Youth Workers have full-time jobs or part-time jobs plus children so are extremely busy. We all realise the importance of not only increasing the pool of staff to reduce the workload but also the need to have a larger pool of volunteers to bring new skills, ideas and support to the Club. As Sarah and Ronnie have recently had to resign as Youth Workers, due to work commitments, this is even more critical.

New staff / volunteer rota system

In the past, arrangements for asking for support from parents have been rather 'ad hoc' but we are introducing a new system to make it much easier for parents who would like to come now and again. One of our problems is that, by law, we need to have at least one adult present per 10 children at the Club. As we currently get an average of over 40 each session if we don't have at least five adults around we are meant to cancel the Club for that night. We hope that the new system will ensure that at least six adults will indicate that they can come to each session, so that if one has to drop out at the last minute no one has to phone around to arrange cover.



Your kid's Youth Club needs

We are hoping that all parents of children who come regularly to the Club could commit to volunteering just once per term or perhaps a couple of times each year. You would not need to be 'Police checked' to volunteer or even bring any particular skills. However, if there was some skill / useful experience that you could bring along so much the better, even if it was a favourite game of cards to play with the

kids. You could help out with the football, badminton, pool/snooker, various craft activities or other games or just (like the kids) hang out with everyone there and enjoy a cup of tea, a biscuit and chat. The most important thing for the Club is your presence to ensure the safety of the children by having the correct ratio of adults to children. We also hope this will be a great opportunity to get to meet other parents and young people in the area.

The new rota system

At the start of each new term we will send out a rota (like the one attached) which has the dates of YC. We hope that you'll be able to tell us if you can come for a night and tell us which of the nights you know you couldn't make. Then YC staff would organise the volunteer rota and let you know which night we'd hope you could come to. We also plan to remind you either with an e-mail or phone call the weekend before. You'd also be most welcome to use the Youth Club buses for free to get to the Club.

Another advantage of telling us in advance when you can come is that we can use Club funds to purchase items that you might need if you want to organise a particular activity (e.g. sports items, a new game we don't already have or ingredients for cooking). All ideas are most welcomed. All new volunteers will be taken around by a Youth Worker on their first evening and introduced to everyone, shown where everything is and what we do and how we do it.

Youth Club funds

We have a shop that sells a variety of drinks, crisps and sweets (Jamie Oliver probably wouldn't approve but it is only once a week and it is what they want.....yes, a bit lame we know) the sales of which generate the Club funds that pay for trips, parties, games, DVDs, sports equipment, etc.

A safe, fun environment

We encourage a fun and happy atmosphere but watch keenly for overly rowdy behaviour and bad language which we quickly stop. In this way we hope to provide a fun but safe environment where kids can learn new skills, make new friendships and build on existing ones. We hope that with continued efforts from both Youth Workers and volunteers the Club can go from strength to strength providing local kids with another great place to hang out and have fun.

Want to help out? What should you do next?

If you feel that you could volunteer once a term (or, even more!) or have any questions please return the

attached rota sheet or send an e-mail to us at asyouthclub@lycos.com telling us when you'd like to come. If you think that you might want to come once a fortnight or more and would like to become a paid Youth Worker please contact Eoghan Carmichael on 01397-709228 (eoghan.Carmichael@highland.gov.uk).

Many thanks. We look forward to hearing from you.

So who are the current Youth Workers?

Chris Ryan

Chris has been in the area since 1985 and has 3 children (17, 13 & 11) who all attend, or have attended school in Strontian. He has worked for Marine Harvest for the past 21 years. His interests are mainly sports orientated and he does football, badminton, basketball and games with the kids on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

June Ryan

June moved to the area in 1988 and has been coming to the Youth Club for about 3 years. She runs the tuck



shop for the kids & she works in the High School in Strontian and know most of the kids who attend. She is married to Chris (above).

Robert and Justine Dunn

Robert has been with the Club for 2-3 years and Justine 1-2. They moved to Strontian four years ago after working in tropical forest management. They have started an organic mushroom growing company and have four children (15, 12, 8 and 3).



As well as driving the minibus and doing the occasional cookery session Robert attends the Youth Club most Tuesdays and helps with various sports. Justine attends most Thursdays and usually brings along a new craft activity each week.

