



StEP into Christmas!!!

(Thanks to Mike Cook for
that cheesy gem...)

Welcome to the

December edition of the

Volunteer Voice newsletter. Read on for news about the new StEP staff team, weird and wonderful recipes for Christmas baking inspiration and a look back over the successes of the last year..

The StEP would like to wish you all a fun and festive last week at ECHO, we will close on Friday 22nd December, and reopen on Tuesday 2nd January, 2024. But for now, read on, relax, grab a glass of mulled wine, and enjoy.

Introducing the new StEP staff team

Roz Johnson is responsible for the strategic development of the StEP as Volunteer Manager, as well as all the other things she usually does!



Frankie Farrell is responsible for the recruitment, induction, training and support of participant and supported volunteers who wish to gain work experience and take steps towards employment, as the Outreach Officer.



Sue Palliser is responsible for the recruitment, induction, training and support of volunteers within ECHO projects, and will be supporting Roz and Frankie in their roles, as Volunteer Coordinator.



Christmas Recipes



In the November edition of the newsletter, the Volunteer voice asked for your Christmas recipe contributions. Thanks to all who sent in their recipes... some may have a higher probability of being made than others...

From Marleen de Kluizenaar, volunteer at Studio Mirai we have Appelflappen. This is a typical Dutch recipe for Apple Beignets/ Fritters which are traditionally eaten on New Years Eve.

From Jodie Thompson, Finance Officer at ECHO we have the suggestion of a classic sherry trifle. The Volunteer Voice have learned their lesson where Jodie is concerned, after being told her preference for an autumnal dish was a 'thick spicy soup', they then chose a spicy leek and potato soup and then Jodie got all the credit for such a fabulous dish!



Christmas Recipes



Bernice Townson, a Social and Leisure volunteer has sent in a recipe for Christmas tree rice krispie treats. Bernice says she has made them before and they are really easy and tasty.

And then, for the grand finale, the pièce de resistance, a recipe from Mike Cook, Chief Officer of ECHO who has sent the Volunteer Voice a recipe for the arctic delicacy of Kiviak.



Marleen's Appelflappen

Dutch apple beignets are traditionally served at New Year's Eve celebrations in the Netherlands just before all those New Year's diet resolutions kick in. So tuck in while you have a chance.

Prep:10 mins
Cook:20 mins
Resting Time:60 mins
Total:90 mins
Servings:12 servings



Ingredients

- * 1 tsp sugar
- * 1/2 cup lukewarm water
- * 4 1/2 tsp dry instant yeast
- * 4 cups (400g) plain flour
- * 1/4 cup (50g) sugar
- * 2 large eggs
- * 2 cups (475ml) whole milk
- * 1 tsp salt
- * 6 medium apples
- * Vegetable oil for frying
- * Icing sugar for garnish
- * Cinnamon sugar for garnish





Method

- * Gather the ingredients.
- * In a small bowl, mix 1 teaspoon of sugar into 1/2 cup of lukewarm water.
- * Sprinkle the yeast on top and allow to stand for 10 minutes (if the yeast doesn't bubble, discard and buy new yeast as it means the yeast is no longer active).
- * Stir to combine and set aside.
- * Mix together the flour and sugar in a large bowl and make a well in the middle.
- * Add the eggs as well as the yeast mixture.
- * Warm up milk in the microwave (it should be lukewarm).
- * Add half of the milk to the well in the flour and mix until all ingredients are combined.
- * Add the rest of the milk and whisk until smooth.
- * Cover the bowl with a damp dish towel and allow to rise in a warm area for about 1 hour.
- * Once the dough has doubled, stir in the salt. The dough should be very slack and have an almost thick batter consistency.



- * Heat the oil in a deep pan or in a deep-fat fryer to 350 F/180 C. To check whether the oil is at the right temperature, stand the handle of a wooden spoon in the oil. If little bubbles form around it, the oil is ready.
- * Peel, core, and slice the apples into thick rounds.
- * Using your fingers or tweezers, dip the apple slices into the dough mixture shaking off any excess batter.
- * Gently drop each apple round into the hot oil.
- * The fritters will sink to the bottom of the pan and then pop right back up. You should be able to fry at least 6 fritters at a time.
- * Fry until golden brown on both sides, carefully flipping only once when required.
- * Drain on a tray lined with paper towels.
- * Sieve icing sugar over the apple beignets along with a dusting of ground cinnamon, and serve warm.



Jodie's Boozy Bailey's Trifle

(Recipe sourced by the
Volunteer Voice)

Ingredients



CHOCOLATE SPONGE

- * 200g dark chocolate plus 2 squares
- * 6 large eggs (must be room temperature)
- * 175g white caster sugar
- * 1tbsp Baileys

BAILEYS GANACHE

- * 300ml double cream
- * 100ml Baileys
- * 300g milk chocolate

BAILEYS CREAM

- * 600ml double cream
- * 4tbsp drinking chocolate powder
- * 100ml Baileys





EQUIPMENT

- * Weighing scales
- * Measuring spoons
- * Measuring jug
- * 2 Large mixing bowls
- * Small mixing bowl
- * Electric whisk
- * Metal mixing spoon
- * Rectangle 23x33cm (9"x13") nonstick swiss roll tin
- * Parchment/baking paper
- * 4/8 Dessert glasses depending on the size of dessert you want
- * Saucepan
- * Grater





Method

Sponge Layer

- * Preheat the oven to 190C/375F (170C/340F fan assisted) and line a swiss roll tray with baking paper.
- * Melt 175g of the dark chocolate, then leave to cool until almost room temp, but still liquid.
- * Break the eggs and put the whites in one bowl, while the yolks can go in another with the sugar.
- * Whisk the egg yolks and sugar together until pale and ribbon-like.
- * Add the melted, cooled chocolate and fold through
- * Whisk the egg whites until really stiff – it's easiest to use an electric mixer then tip into the chocolate mixture.
- * Fold through as gently as you can, then pour the mixture into the tin and level off.
- * Bake for 20 minutes until risen, then remove from the oven and leave to cool completely. Turn the cooled sponge out and peel off the used paper.
- * Cut or break the sponge into roughly inch pieces – it's very light and airy so should break easily.



Chocolate Ganache

- * Put the cream in a saucepan or heat in 30-second blasts in the microwave until almost boiling.
- * Break the milk chocolate into a bowl and pour the heated cream mixture over it. Stir until it melts together, forming a glossy ganache.
- * Stir in the Baileys and leave to cool.





Baileys Cream Topping

- * Whip the cream and Baileys until you have very soft peaks.
- * Add the drinking chocolate powder and whisk briefly until just slightly more firm.



To Finish

- * Share the sponge pieces gently into the bottom of a dessert glass.
- * Share the cooled ganache between each glass, pouring over the sponge – resist the urge to eat!
- * Spoon the whipped cream mixture into each dessert glass, working into soft peaks.
- * Chill for an hour to set.



Bernice's Festive Rice Krispie Treats

Serves: 16

Ready in: 55 mins

Prep time: 45 mins

Cook time: 10 mins

Ingredients

- * 3 Tbsp (42g) salted butter, diced into 1Tbsp pieces
- * 1 (10 oz) bag mini marshmallows
- * Green gel food colouring
- * 6 cups (170g) Rice Krispies cereal
- * White decorating icing
- * 16 miniature Reeses peanut butter cups, unwrapped
- * Round red sprinkles
- * 16 star sprinkles or yellow mini M&Ms





Method

- * Melt butter in a large saucepan over medium-low heat.
- * Add in marshmallows and stir until melted, while tinting with green food colouring to reach desired shade.
- * Remove from heat add in Rice Krispies cereal and fold mixture until evenly coated. Let cool about 5 minutes.
- * Spray hands with non-stick cooking spray and shape about 1/3 cup to 1/2 cup of the mixture into into cones, while pressing firmly so they'll hold together.
- * Decorate with sprinkles, using the icing to get them to stick. Then put icing on the Reeses and place one under each tree.
- * If you want the icing to harden let them rest overnight, or you can just eat them right away.



Mikes Arctic Kiviak



Kiviak is a traditional Inuit dish that's as intriguing as it is polarizing. Made by fermenting auk birds in sealskin, it's a survival food that has sustained Arctic communities for centuries. This delicacy encapsulates the resourcefulness of Inuit culture.

Mike said:

A freshly disembowelled seal is stuffed with up to 500 small arctic birds. It is then sewn shut and sealed with seal fat to prevent flies from getting in. The birds are buried and left to ferment in the carcass for 3 to 18 months. Kiviak is eaten by biting off the bird's head and then sucking out the juices inside, but the birds can also be eaten whole, bones and all. It is especially popular during the arctic winter celebrations, especially during Christmas.

The Volunteer Voice
says:

Hmm.



Snapshot of 2023

January

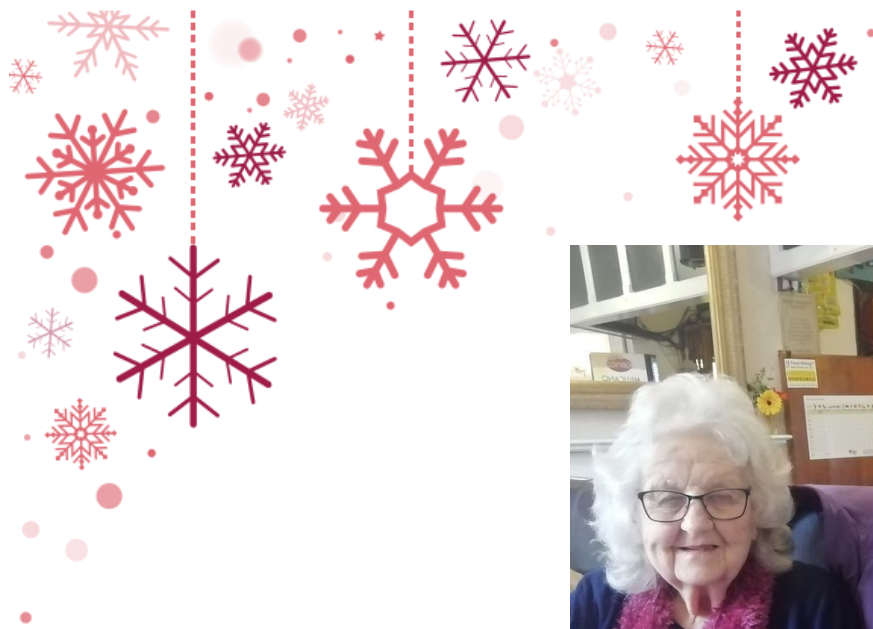


About Face were

out and about with a tour of local primary schools. In partnership with the Leominster Cultural Consortium, About Face performed 'Creation' with a follow up workshop, which also introduced the young students to issues around about disability and diversity.

They were delighted to be contacted by Matt Lewis, Headteacher of Stoke Prior primary, the first school visited. Matt commented, "It was a great production using a different style of theatre. The puppets and models captured children's imagination. It is great to be able to present a drama group that puts an emphasis on a well planned and rehearsed piece of drama. It modelled inclusivity for our children who engaged really well with the content".





February



February saw Clever Betsy down the pub celebrating Stephen's birthday, and the ECHO shop started hosting Warm spaces craft mornings on a Thursday.

Eaton Barn held a successful volunteer day, with a lot of big jobs completed.

Friday LifeLinks celebrated Shrove Tuesday.





March



March saw the new and very successful darts club start, run by Letty at Shooters Bar.

The ECHO shop had a solar powered message for Leominster and any passing potential volunteers...



The fundraising team spent the day at Co-op promoting ECHO's alien colourfest, and being one of Co-ops local causes. Rumour had it that there were aliens spotted around the aisles. But, as aliens don't exist, that can't be true.



April



Eaton Barn held an Easter egg hunt and open day on 6th April. With homemade cakes and plants for sale, it was a well attended event, showcasing beautiful spring gardens .

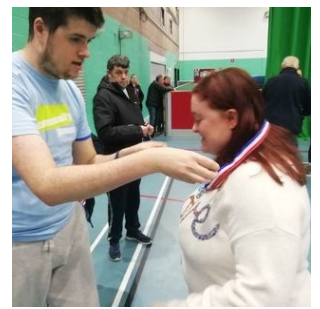
In the lead up to Lisa and Simon's wedding, Friday Club threw Lisa a hen do full of fun, cake and karaoke.



The Priory Centre started their Coronation preparations, with a mask making and bunting activities.

And then, the event many participants had been waiting 5 years for... Herefordshire

Community Games returned for 2023.



April Cont...



Lindsey Evans worked really hard at Clever Betsy to make a small theatre to showcase the beautiful Venetian style carnival masks they had been making. These masks are now for sale.

The May fair once again came to Leominster, and lots of ECHO participants had free rides and free candyfloss thanks to the fair organisers.





May brought the long awaited wedding of Simon and Lisa Harris. Staff and participants were kindly invited to take part in the celebrations and watch them make their vows.

Friday Club then hosted a Coronation tea party, complete with a throne. They love a good photo opportunity!



ECHO participants started to get excited about alien colourfest ... as did the staff.



May Cont...

Colourfest arrived to
Leominster! (and some of
the paint stayed for a while).



June



June started with Aida's Accessible Amble walk and a barbecue afterwards at The Priory Centre, cooked by Letty and enjoyed by many. June also saw Learning Disability week, with ECHO projects celebrating in lots of different ways.

Clever Betsy held a coffee morning and open day, the Walking Group walked Aida's Accessible Amble and then had a fish and chip picnic on the Grange. Eaton Barn also held an Open Day and Social and Leisure hosted a dog picnic. Friday Club and LifeLinks joined up to have games on the Grange and a picnic, and About Face spent the week getting their performance 'Someone Else's Train' ready to take to schools the following week.



July



ECHO launched the 'All the 3's' fundraising challenge in honour of our 33rd birthday.

Nick Baker cycled 33 and a third miles in Greece, with another leg in Spain, and one in Herefordshire accompanied by Louis Baker and Chris Blum.

Studio Mirai volunteers rebuilt and extended the outdoor storage unit, with all of the cladding made from donated wooden pallets.

Letty had her hair dyed all the colours of the rainbow to raise money for ECHO, Radio ECHO flew solo for the first time with Nick away and our inclusive footballers attended an awards evening at Lads Club.



August



About Face and LifeLinks joined forces. LifeLinks love helping with the fortnightly Herefordshire Community Reuse and Recycling group, and managed to get lots of wedding dresses for About face to use in a 2024 project. However, more pressing than that was their trip to Barry Island.



September



Eaton Barn once again held a volunteering day, this time to celebrate Mayors Community Weekend. With all the hard work done, everyone enjoyed a barbecue and a catch up.

Looking ahead to a fall in temperature, Studio Mirai started to focus on keeping the residents of Leominster warm through the winter, by preparing bags and bags of kindling to sell. These are still available to buy, at £4 for 1 netted bag, and £15 for 4. perfect for when you are roasting chestnuts on an open fire this festive season.

REP Group started to prepare for a 'Hear Our Voices' get together, which gives people with learning disabilities the opportunity to share their views and have their voices heard.



October



October saw About face's turn to take part in the 'All the 3's' challenge. Singing 33 songs over the space of a week it was a really special and quite moving event. The Steps to employment project received funding and therefore was launched on the 2nd October, advertising for a Volunteer Manager to oversee the strategic development of the project. Co-op announced we would be one of their local causes again, with £2965.22 raised from Co-op members in the past year. For every pound co-op members spend, ECHO gets 1p. So if you haven't signed up as a Co-op member yet, pop into your local store and choose ECHO as your chosen cause. Every penny counts! Clever Betsy spent time making lavender bags, which flew out of the ECHO shop, and turned their talents to making requested and very popular aprons. Claire Mee attended the SEND summit, networking with parent carers to make sure they know what ECHO can do for them and finding out what activities ECHO could offer in the future.



November



Preparations started for the Light Up Leominster event , with participants making lanterns from willow, thanks to funding from Leominster Festival and Leominster Cultural Consortium.

Vacancies were posted for a Volunteer Coordinator and an Outreach Officer to join Roz, appointed as Volunteer Manager, in the StEP.

ECHO's first Big Fat Quiz fundraising event at Leominster golf Club saw 20 teams of quizzers take part, and over £3,500 raised.

REP group were thrilled to hear the news that train ticket offices will not be closed, after campaigning to keep them open, by writing a letter to the train companies.



Ticket offices saved!



Rep Group and friends at the Hereford ticket office



Well Done Rep Group!

ECHO
Better Choices. Better Lives.
Positive about disabilities

ECHO
Better Choices. Better Lives.

AD: West Dorset
Leominster
WDB: 0000
01534 620007
rep-group@leominsterfestival.co.uk
14th July 2023

ECHO Rep Group
Save the Train Ticket Offices

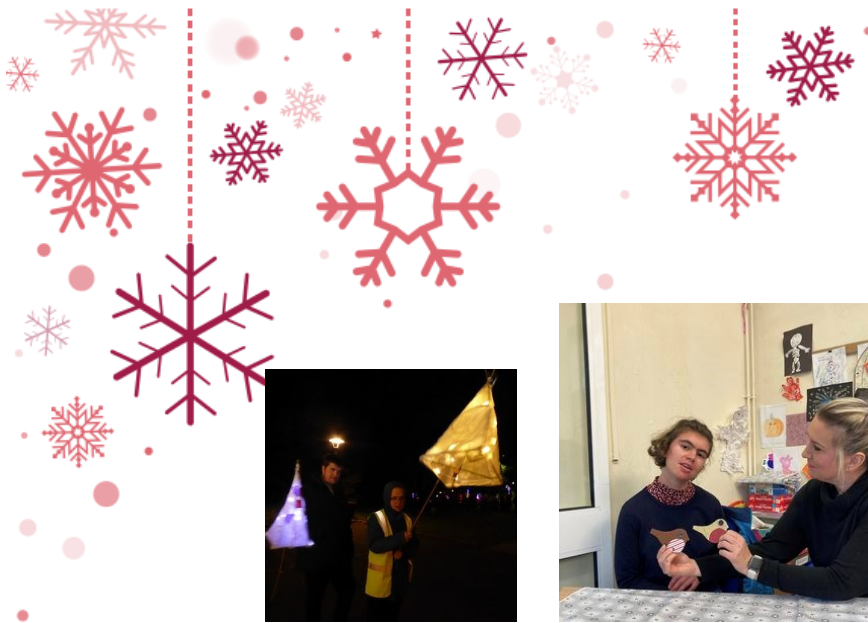
Dear Train Operator

The ECHO Rep Group is very sad to hear that you are planning about closing ticket offices at your station. It is very important for disabled people and we want to offer to your station. Closing the ticket offices will do so to ECHO is a charity that we want to keep it in our job as representatives of the participants of people with disabilities. We want to make sure we have enough people to make our lives easier.

A really nice day! Thank you for help!

All best wishes

November Cont...



The Priory Centre started making jam for the Victorian Christmas Market in December, and more lantern making workshops took place at Clever Betsy and Friday Club. The Priory Centre and LifeLinks started on Christmas Crafts, and Light Up Leominster finally happened! It was an amazing couple of days. When Leominster does something well, it does it really well.



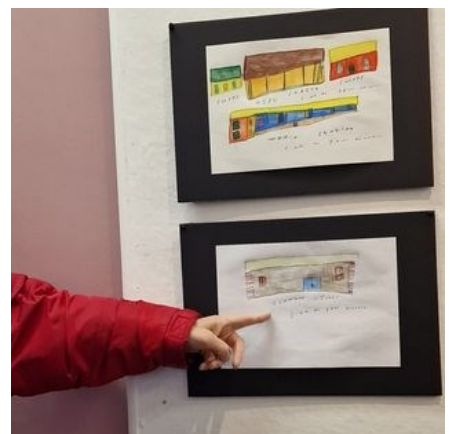
November Cont...



Radio ECHO held a planning day for the AGM, their first time hosting the event, and spent the day arguing (discussing) about which role would go to which person.

ECHO participant Paul Hughes created some brilliant art at The Priory Centre. This work, called 'An Artist's Eye', is now on display at Leominster Community Centre.

Friday Club and The Priory Centre spent time getting ready for the Friday Club Fundraiser, due to kick off December at ECHO with a bang.



December



Rose Tinted Rags launched their exhibition on December 3rd at The Courtyard in Hereford. Described as 'neurodivergent artists working in painting and stichery; historical textiles and fine art photography, the work displayed was simply beautiful.

Eaton Barn are still selling Christmas wreaths and light up stars and have lots of jams and chutneys available too.

Friday Club had a lovely time bowling and having a Christmas meal together, and then it was the ECHO AGM.

With many special moments, it was an amazing celebration of all of ECHO's participants, volunteers and staff. Praise must go to Radio ECHO for hosting, and people are saying 'best AGM ever!'.



December Cont...



The 9th December saw lots of ECHO participants, volunteers and staff take part in and visit the Leominster Victorian Christmas Market.

Eaton Barn, The Priory Centre and Clever Betsy were selling their high quality items on stalls at Grange Court.

The last week before we close for Christmas will be full of Christmas parties. The trip to the panto has happened for Clever Betsy, and they are having a pamper day with Stefan, Friday Lifelinks's volunteer offering various massages. REP



Group and ECHO Weavers will be having their celebrations at Wetherspoons, and the ECHO staff may even have a little Christmas get together too.





Merry Christmas
ECHO Volunteers

and best wishes
from Trustee Support

Merry Christmas from REP Group



dreamtime.





And so that is the end of the Volunteer Voice newsletter
for December.

The StEP would like to wish you all a very happy
Christmas and a wonderful New Year.

Thank you for everything you all do, I know it has been said so many times before, but we cannot do what we do without the time, commitment and kindness given by our volunteers week after week.

I am really excited about developing the StEP with my new staff team, who will be starting on the 8th January 2024.

See you all next year,

Roz