

# Community Matters

Issue 3 Spring 2018

HIGGS  
& SONS  
SOLICITORS

## A community that matters

**A lot can change in the space of a year and that can certainly be said when it comes to the charity fundraising landscape. With a staggering number of projects undertaken in 2017, there are numerous opportunities to get involved and make a difference to our community for the year ahead.**

Aside from the usual classics that took place the previous year (football tournament, Easter egg collection and Give and Gain Day), some new ideas were introduced to maximise the opportunities to support our chosen charities.

The 'Tree of Happiness', Bridgnorth Lions Sponsored Walk and Tough Mudder were all new additions to the CSR calendar; Adam Cutler rode his bike from London to Paris and Steve Chaplin led the Higgs team into the Saltwells wilderness for a day of (very) heavy duty gardening.

Many of you have shown, through hard work, determination and commitment, that community really does matter to you and that is evident in the total amount raised for our charity of the year, NSPCC which was an incredible £22,084.20.



## Charity of the Year 2018

Further to the firm-wide announcement made at the end of last year, we are thrilled to be supporting *Dudley Mind* as Higgs' Charity of the Year for 2018. Based locally, Dudley Mind aims to ensure "that anyone with a mental health problem has somewhere to turn for advice and support".

For more information on the incredible work they do, go to [dudleymind.org.uk](http://dudleymind.org.uk).





# Don't worry, be happy

Alongside their day-to-day workload, it's fair to say that our Trainees have once again been tireless in their involvement with the firm's charitable and community activities. The constant flurry of engaging emails and events really kept the momentum going throughout the course of the year.

To mark International Happiness Week in March, the Trainees came up with the idea of introducing a 'tree of happiness' to our Waterfront offices on which colleagues were encouraged to place a tag describing what makes them happy. Each pledge of happiness came with a donation to the firm's charity of the year.

"We are surrounded by news of the tragedies and challenges faced by people around the world," comments Sian Marks, one of the Trainees who came up with the idea.

"We felt that International Happiness Week was the ideal opportunity for colleagues to focus on the things that made them happy and in the process help us to raise funds for the NSPCC."



"Hearing my daughter have a good laugh with her friends."

"Sunshine and wine."

"Salted caramel."

"Seeing my baby boy dance for the first time this week (to the Rolling Stones!)."

"Spending time with my granddaughters who live in Luxembourg."

"It was a fantastic initiative," commented Tim Jones. "We are all rightly concerned with the difficulties faced by the world, but occasionally it is good to re-focus and appreciate the things that bring us happiness."

Joyful foliage aside, the Trainees continued their successful fundraising forays into April, with the annual Easter egg collection. Over the course of three weeks, 165 Easter eggs were kindly donated by Higgs members of staff and given to Wolverhampton's Haven refuge.

Higgs has a long-term association with the Haven, which supports women and dependent children who are vulnerable to domestic violence, homelessness and abuse.

Tim was extremely pleased with the outcome and said of the Trainees: "They have all worked hard and the results certainly do speak for themselves."

"Colleagues have been extremely generous in donating so many eggs – in fact you could say they have 'egg-celled' themselves!"



# The event that keeps on giving

In May, Sian Marks, Jamie De Souza and Kate Campbell-Gunn spent the day helping school children with health and fitness at Give & Gain Day. Teaming up with ERIKS for the sixth year running, the day was great fun for the children involved and a fantastic excuse to burn a few calories into the bargain.

More than 120 children from various schools took part in the day where Higgs & Sons and ERIKS organised activities including Dodgeball and an assault course. The activities were chosen because they could be easily modified to include children of all abilities and to accommodate children with additional needs.



# Are we there yet?

Whilst many were enjoying a relaxing bank Holiday with family and friends, Rachael Watkins, Jordan Hollingsworth, Shana Quinn, Georgia Stott, Sian Marks and Abbey Jones all learnt not to underestimate a long walk on Monday 29th May after taking part in the Bridgnorth Lions Sponsored Walk.

With 22 miles of steep hills and tough terrain, the group saw more ups and downs than a theme park rollercoaster, and with at least 200 blisters between them, we think they fully deserved the final stop at a Bridgnorth hostelry (purely for medicinal reasons of course)!





## Top of the class

**Read to Succeed has been successfully providing support to local schoolchildren for four years now.**

The project entails our volunteers going into local schools to provide assistance for children with development problems with reading or maths. Over the course of the four years, around 15 colleagues have offered up their time and energy.

The volunteers spend 30 minutes one morning every other week with the 4-8 year olds, this year focusing on Hawbush Primary School.

Carole Maddock, who has been involved with the scheme from the start, commented:

"It's a wonderful initiative to be involved in, particularly when you see the children improve week on week. We are lucky to have had participation from so many different areas of the business, allowing us to devote time to the community in such a direct way."

Sara Shepherd, Philip Martin-Summers, Linda Legge, Debra Cottam, Val Trevis, Katie Willems and Irene Williams are all due to take part next term.

To highlight the incredible accomplishments of our Read to Succeed volunteers, this is what Alison Pell (outgoing Head Teacher, Hawbush Primary School) had to say:

"The children love working on a 1:1 basis with the volunteers. They have all improved their academic ability, but more so, they have grown in self-esteem and confidence. Many of our children do not have the opportunity to work on a 1:1 basis with anyone at home so they really value the care and attention given by the volunteers. This, for us, is the most valuable aspect of the project."

## Pedal power

**Not content with riding the canals of the Black Country, keen cyclist Adam Cutler set his sights on some slightly more distant sights in June.**

As part of a group of ten, Adam rode 200 miles from London to Paris in the space of just 24 hours. Despite going over his handlebars after 10 miles of London traffic, Adam sat back on the saddle and powered on, continuing his mammoth journey with a 5am start in France.

120 miles later, he arrived at his final destination – the Eiffel Tower – with one hour to spare.

Adam spoke (see what we did there) about his trip with great enthusiasm: "It was a fantastic experience and having survived the terrifying Parisian traffic, I felt a big sense of relief at the sight of La Tour Eiffel!"

Higgs' very own Sir Bradley Wiggins raised almost £590 for NSPCC. Well done Adam!

Continuing with the cycling theme, in September Jamie Partington took part in the Velo 100 mile race in Birmingham. Not even owning a bike before the event, Jamie certainly rose to the challenge and raised a substantial amount for the NSPCC.



## Questions and Answers

**Back by popular demand, the Higgs Annual Quiz raised just short of £4,000 in October, with 40 teams flocking to the Molineux to take part.**

Amanda Synott of the NSPCC said: "Thank you so much to Higgs & Sons for making us their nominated charity, and for hosting such a fantastic and well-attended quiz – we hope everyone had a brilliant time.

"We receive around 90% of our funding from generous supporters like those taking part in the quiz – amazing people who believe in our work and believe that every childhood is worth fighting for. Big or small, the gifts and donations we receive make a difference to the children and young people we help through our services."

## Expanding funds... and waistlines

**On a less healthy note, it has to be said that this year's 'Bake-off' attempts have been nothing short of fabulous; a treat for the eyes and the taste buds!**

From Shana's Chocolate and Nutella Ferrero Rocher cake to Peter Manford's 'fancy' brownies and Jordan's sausage rolls, we can thank our 'star baker' colleagues for the extra pounds put on over the last few months!

So if you struggled to squeeze into your Christmas threads in December, you know who to blame! It's incredible how generous staff can be when you add a truckload of salted caramel and sugar to the mix.





## The balsam bashers



**Back in June, three green figured volunteers supported the Saltwells Nature Reserve Rangers in clearing an area of extremely quick growing and aggressive Himalayan balsam.**

Of the experience, Steven said: "It was enjoyable seeing the difference we were able to make by clearing the area. Of course, a trip to the Saltwells pub at lunchtime helped refuel the energy reserves as we returned for an afternoon of more 'bashing'."

The Rangers were very appreciative of the work undertaken, with Senior Warden, Alan Preece expressing his appreciation:

"Thank you again to you and your crew! We got loads done and we're really impressed with how far it's been pushed back. Hope you all are not itching too much from the nettles?!"

Steven Chaplin, Richard Stone and Chris Sawyer worked together for the day of 'balsam bashing'. The work wasn't easy by any means, with the three sharing a significant amount of nettle stings between them by the end of the day.



## From strength to strength

**The football tournament alone raised an incredible £8,300 for our charity of the year. The much anticipated event saw 48 six-a-side teams battle it out for the title, with the team from Lloyds Bank Commercial Birmingham beating Curo Chartered Accountants in the final.**

Richard Griffiths commented: "The Higgs & Sons charity football tournament continues to go from strength to strength since being launched in 2006, and this year was no exception.

"Despite a real air of competitiveness on the pitch, off the pitch there is a fantastic sense of pulling together to raise as much money as possible for a good cause, while having some fun."

## Sing when you're winning

**Fundraising took a musical turn in July when Higgs' Choir competition saw four local schools take to the stage at Brierley Hill Civic to sing in front of a packed audience.**

Children from Greenfield Primary School, Brindley Heath Junior School, Hawbush Primary School and Pedmore CE School each sang two songs with Greenfield emerging triumphant, as voted by a panel of expert judges.

The evening also included two performances from Legally Sound, Higgs & Sons' award-winning choir.

Alice Eastwood, who was one of three judges at said: "What a fantastic event it was! All of the choirs were a credit to their schools and the audience and judges were blown away with the standard of singing – choosing an eventual winner was a tough call."

Alice was joined on the judging panel by Tim Harding, a musical director at University of Wolverhampton, and Therese Pearson, Got 2 Sing Youth Choir Leader.

Clare Griffiths was thrilled at how the evening turned out: "This was a really exciting opportunity for the children to perform and compete in a professional setting, be in with the chance of winning a prize for their school and help generate funds for a vital local project to safeguard young people – while at the same time having lots of fun."

The event helped to raise £555 for the NSPCC.



## Shock tactics

**There's nothing quite like going for a nice 12 mile trek around a stately home with your colleagues, only to be made to jump into freezing water, ride a death slide and run through a field of electric shocks!**

Higgs sent a dozen of its best to tackle the Tough Mudder challenge at Belvoir Castle in May. Trainee Jordan Hollingsworth, one of the 'Dirty Dozen' commented:

"Tough Mudder certainly lived up to its name! Some of the obstacles were really extreme but we all stuck together and helped each other through.

"It was a great team effort and not only did we all survive, I think we actually enjoyed it!"





## Ch-ch-ch changes

**We are taking a slightly different approach to fundraising this year as it has been decided that 50% of our fundraising will be allocated to our Charity of the Year, with the other 50% allocated to the *Higgs Charitable Foundation*.**

The Committee acting as the Higgs Charitable Foundation will meet in early September to make grants to various charities which have been nominated by you, six of which are as follows:

- Edward's Trust
- Mary Stevens Hospice
- Beacon Centre for the Blind
- White House Cancer Support
- We Love Carers
- West Midlands Air Ambulance

Later in the year, you will have the opportunity of not only nominating a charity for 2019 but to put forward charities for consideration for grant applications via the Higgs Charitable Foundation.

## Best dressed 2017



**A huge congratulations to those that took part in the decoration of our NSPCC Festival of Trees, which won first place at the end of 2017.**

The tree was covered in branded baubles and handmade decorations with the help of local primary school, Hawbush. Each child designed and made a Christmas tree decoration and added their very own Christmas wish.

A big thank you to Clare Griffiths, Emma Hadley, Shana Quinn, Sarah Murphy, Sian Marks, Ellie Norton, Melita Bown, Georgia Stott and Charanjeet Bhogal who all helped to coordinate this project.

## So much more to come

Our fundraising relies so heavily on employee participation as you all play a huge part in planning and running projects from start to finish. Whether it's getting involved with our Read to Succeed scheme with local school children, putting your endurance to the test in a physical challenge or simply engaging in social media in order to help to raise awareness, all contributions are vitally important and very gratefully accepted.

So, if you'd like to get involved in any of the above initiatives this year, in whatever way you can, please contact Tim Jones.