



The Magazine of Grampian Opportunities

Grampian **Opportunities**
Finding the way forward



Issue thirteen

Hello Everyone,
Welcome to our bumper edition for the summer. Hope you enjoy reading this while enjoying the sunshine. A couple of special messages of thanks must go out. Firstly to Linda for allowing us to have this extended edition, and secondly to the hard working media team and people behind the scenes. Hope everyone has enjoyable summer.
Best wishes and kind regards
Eddy.



Picture of Maurosauris

HAPPY BELATED BIRTHDAY MAURICE, 60 TIMES FROM GRAMPIAN OPPORTUNITIES.

Greg's Work Experience



Greg, one of our volunteers at GO, has been busy gaining valuable training and work experience this year. In January he was one of the lucky students to gain a place on the very first course on Training for Employment Scheme at Aberdeen's Inspire Café Academy. Greg then had a one week work placement at J. G. Ross Coffee Shop at Highclere, Inverurie.

Greg is pictured above showing his certificates to Maurice Parkin, one of our Board members. In addition to a Food Hygiene Certificate, and a certificate of achievement for completing the Café Academy programme, Greg also had a certificate for completing a computer course as part of his volunteering activity.

Our editor managed to catch up with him to find out about his experiences. Since completing his one week work placement Greg has done a further 3 day work placement at J. G. Ross Coffee Shop. As a Kitchen assistant Greg's main duties were clearing/cleaning tables, doing the dish washing and helping with food production such as making sandwiches and salads. His training at Café Academy came in handy as he was able to apply and develop the skills that he had learnt there to help him. Luckily Greg had no difficult customers during his placement and he would be happy to work more with the general public. As for the future Greg has thoroughly enjoyed his experiences and would be delighted to get a job in the catering profession. I'm sure everyone at GO are keeping their fingers crossed that Greg gets a job in his chosen career.



United Nations

On the 28th of March 3 volunteers were invited by the Scottish Human Rights Commission, to the Acorn Centre for an event on the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. We were part of a conference meeting. Duncan Wilson introduced the program of the day and presentations were given by Disability Campaigner Diane Mulligan, introduced as the UK Candidate for election to the UN committee, Hilary Third who was from the Equality Unit of the Scottish Government and Lynne Welsh Head of legal EHRC of Scotland.

In the afternoon all the areas of Inverness, Oban, and Inverurie were given questions to help them think of issues that disabled people face. The issues raised the most were **Access, Transport, Health, Employment** and **cuts to benefits**. When it came to the time of the broadcast to all three areas it was not a shock to discover that these topics were highlighted by all groups. GO was represented by Edwina and Bill during the broadcast and their photo taken by James.



The feeling was that the discussion time at the event was most useful and although linking with different groups was a great idea, technical difficulties with the video link didn't work too well. However, I would like to add that the internet forum which is on their website was a great idea and it ensured that people from both city and rural areas like Shetland and Orkney could be heard.

The event was at the Acorn Centre and a special mention must be made of the lovely shortbread!

www.scottishhumanrights.com

Changes to the benefits system

The government is proposing radical changes to the welfare system

Areas affected are:

1. employment and support allowance
2. job seekers allowance
3. disability living allowance
4. housing benefit
5. council tax benefit

This will affect millions of people already hard pressed in the current economic climate, and these changes are causing stress and anxiety to vulnerable individuals and organisations. It is a complex and politically charged situation.

There was a march by disabled people in London in May this year which highlighted the changes taking place. More information on the Hardest Hit website:

<http://www.hardesthit.org.uk/> . Welfare reform has to be fairly applied and not just to the most vulnerable in society.

That is the measure of a civilised society to look after all its members. Advice can be found so no one should feel alone. Help can be obtained through GO and Citizens Advice Bureaux, so do not feel helpless or alone.

Helen's trip to Dundee



On Monday 25th April I went to Dundee with Grampian Opportunities and mum. The weather was glorious it was really sunny and quite hot. There were two cars that went. It took two hours to get there and there were no road works (but this is not always the case!). We found the hotel and booked in. I liked my room, and after we checked in, we had a drink outside in the sun. It was really hot. We drove to Camperdown Park but didn't have time to see the animals. We did look at another hotel where people could stay for a short break and we gave this information to the short-break group at Grampian Opportunities. The second hotel was beside the ice rink and a cinema and four different places to eat.

On the Tuesday we went shopping to the Overgate Centre and I had a fish pedicure. It felt calming and like bubbles on my feet I felt a difference straight away. I was nervous but not scared but I was an advert for the fish treatment as I kept telling the passers-by in the shopping centre how good it was and they had a go.

Garra Rufa fish pedicures are the latest treatment to hit the beauty industry worldwide. The fish, also known as Doctor Fish, gently nibble the dead skin from your hands and feet whilst revitalising the new layer of skin underneath. The effects of dead skin removal can be seen and felt instantly, leaving you with baby soft skin and is known to treat skin conditions such as psoriasis and eczema.

I also went to the Discovery centre and picked up some information on places to visit and an Access Guide for Disabled people to Dundee. More information about the Dundee access group who produced the guide can be found on www.dundeeaccessgroup.co.uk I would recommend Dundee as a short break destination.

When we were enjoying our visits, Denise was with the other GO volunteers helping to facilitate an "Inspiring Breaks" workshop for Shared Care Scotland. At the end of the day we met up for our journey home. Helen

Portfolio Meetings

On Tuesday 15th March, Tuesday 19th April and Wednesday 01 June, some volunteers at GO had a meeting with Kay Diack about starting their portfolios. She gave us lots of ideas on what sort of things we could put into our portfolios from school certificates to photos to U.S.B.'s. Ultimately it is up to each individual how much personal information they wish to include in their portfolio. Kay will be returning from time to time to give further help and advice and keep us motivated.

Spreading Awareness in Aberdeen

A fellow student of my old university Robert Gordon's, contacted me earlier this year to ask for my views on and my experiences of barriers I have faced in my own life. Some of the topics that were discussed were education, work, health, living independently and society's attitudes, as these are where the main barriers can be found. I remembered her from my student days. I also met her more recently at a GO event which she had come to as a representative of her organisation, so I felt relaxed and quite excited about seeing her again.

We had agreed to meet in an eatery for this interview, which was reasonable I felt as she had given me information on what to expect. I remember at the time thinking how she had an in-depth sense of those around her. As she was doing a project to further her learning and gain more awareness and give support to people with a disability, I also felt honoured that she had remembered me and remembered some of the challenging situations I had faced while at university, and I was more than happy to be a part of her research.

While in the interview, she asked me "does it annoy you when people stare at you?" I am so used to it I just ignore it, however if it's a child I understand why. I would prefer it if people asked questions. After the interview she then disclosed that a woman had been staring at me throughout and it annoyed her. I just smiled...!

Trip to Glasgow!

On the 11th of March 2011, I travelled down to Glasgow. It was a day trip to meet a student, who is looking into disability rights and access in all areas of life, as a disabled person; ranging from education, social life's etc, to society's attitudes towards disability, this was part of her PHD.

The day started with a comfortable train journey from Aberdeen. Grampian Opportunities sponsored me to represent them. This was also my first time "flying solo". This was in a way quite a proud moment, but also a very nerve racking moment as I did not know what to expect.

When the train got in it was reassuring that she was there to meet me. This relaxed me slightly, as she put me at ease. Also it surprised me that I was taken aback that she was a fellow wheelchair user. I suppose it comforted me that we were on a level playing field.

The meeting was held at John Lewis eatery, which she said would be quieter. Unfortunately I didn't find this to be the case as it was a very public place. I felt the questioning became very personal. I did not expect this on a first meeting, and I felt at times my confidentiality was compromised due to the public forum.

Overall I felt on the whole the meeting was positive. I feel it is vital that everyone spreads awareness of disability. It was important that the North East was represented. I was proud I was able to go down and attend the meeting alone.

For future meetings, I would suggest, questions should be forwarded in advance. The meeting should be in an appropriate venue. I would make arrangements for proper debrief afterwards with someone I know well, I would hope to learn how to safeguard myself properly.

Eddy.



Speak Up Speak Out

On the 2nd November last year myself Denise Cromar and Emma Rennie, GO volunteers attended a workshop at the Hopeville Social Club in Inverurie. While I have been at GO I have covered a few workshops on a variety of subjects.

When arriving at the 'Speak Up Speak Out' workshop I had no idea what this was about or how it could help me. So I thought I will give it my best. From the minute I walked in I felt relaxed which is a good start.

The workshop is run by Speakers Bank public speaking and Communication Trainers. The purpose of the course is to help people to speak up with more confidence. Nerves are natural and will never completely go away. But in learning tips and techniques, such as remembering to breathe, resisting the temptation to apologise, eye contact, plus more I found this to be a fantastic experience.

For the first time in my life, I spoke to a room full of strangers. I found I was totally unprepared for this.

I would highly recommend this course to everyone. When the workshop was finished that day, I went back to the office to see if it was possible to arrange another course or a follow up course.

Top 10 Tips

1. Be Yourself
2. Eye Contact
3. Structure Your Talk
4. Keep It Simple
5. Power of the Pause
6. Speak from the Heart to be Heard
7. Keep it to time
8. Speak Up Speak Animated
9. Don't Rush It
10. Practice Practice Practice.

To find out more about this type of course www.speakersbank.co.uk
Phyllis Gordon

Volunteering Based Learning

Grampian Opportunities has now registered to be able to access VSkills materials through Volunteer Development Scotland.

- VSkills means volunteering-based learning. Volunteering affords many opportunities to learn and acquire new skills.
- VSkills for Employability is a new, volunteering-based, approach to acquiring the general work skills everyone needs.



Mentee Recruitment

Mentee Recruitment

- Are you stuck in a rut?
- Lost your way?
- Don't know what the first step is or how to take it?

But know that you want to change!

- Scared to speak out or ask for support?
- Say what you really want and be heard and understood!

But know that you need support!

Contact us and discover what New Explorations can do for you by becoming a Mentee.

Support Network

People need support networks. You may not use that phrase or even think of your family, friends and colleagues in those terms but that is what they are – your support network.

For those with disabilities and mental health issues the support network is even more important but often more difficult to establish. But with support much more can be achieved.

Small steps

Being a Mentee can help you to develop skills, confidence and, through discussion, make life's stresses take on a different, less threatening shape. With good mentoring it is possible to explore new opportunities which may have seemed impossible in the past for those with a disability.

Opportunities for change

New Explorations Mentoring Service assists Mentees to be ambitious, to see the opportunities for personal development and, for many, to achieve a job at the end of the journey.

New Explorations Mentoring Service is a one-to-one mentoring service for adults with disabilities in Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen and Moray.

Come and speak to us:

Tricia McLean and Katrina Wilson , Mentoring Coordinators

New Explorations Mentoring Service, Grampian Opportunities

Tel: 01467 629675 or Email: go.mentor@grampianopportunities.org.uk

Short Breaks to promote quality of life

At the end of last year Grampian Opportunities set up a small working group to look at “Short Breaks”. During this time the group have made working links with Shared Care Scotland and Aberdeenshire Council’s Short Break Bureau. We aim to share any learning with these services and the work is proving to be a great opportunity for members to develop their skills and confidence.

General desktop research has led onto more focused research linked to specific enquiries. Information is being gathered through the use of questionnaires. These have been designed to gather information about what has worked for people, what could have been better and what they want to get from a short break in the future.

Members have visited a number of short break facilities and through this have been able to provide advice on the accessibility of accommodation. As a result of this, one of the most successful short breaks supported was a theatre break staying at the Garden Hilton in Aberdeen. The most adventurous enquiry to date has been a request for information on a safari holiday for a wheelchair user. GO has already identified someone who can share their experience of just such an adventure and by gathering case studies based on the experiences people have we hope to encourage others to take up alternative short breaks.

One of the team of volunteers said “Going into a nursing home shouldn't be the place of choice for someone in their twenties. Before I studied for my Social Sciences degree I gained an HNC in travel - so this project is of great interest to me for both these reasons. I've stayed over in Glasgow and Dundee through my volunteering activities and this has made me more aware that care can follow me and support me live my life”.

www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk



Equally Enterprising Trip to Glasgow

Strengthening organisations that focus on equalities

On the 16th of March we got the train from Inverurie to Glasgow which was a good train ride. Once we got to Glasgow we had to ask someone to help us find our hotel as we were not too sure where it was, and once we found the hotel we checked in. There was confusion on how to pay for the hotel as neither of us had photo ID with us, so they would not accept cash. I chose then to pay by card. The hotel was very nice, the staff was very helpful but I would not recommend it to a wheelchair user as it was not very accessible for wheelchairs.

The Equally Enterprising event was very good as we got to find out how the rest of the 10 organisations found the whole experience of the Equally Enterprising. There was someone from the government there to find out how the process went for each organisation. He also told us what will be happening next for the government as there will be new projects happening soon, so check the government website. New information expected in May <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/15300>

Many of the organisations faced similar challenges to us. ODS Consultancy who delivered the programme found that there was a need to factor in expenses and meeting room costs. It was important not to assume that participating organisations could cover these workshop costs. This reflects the same issue we find when offered "free training" when it is delivered out with the area, there is in fact a considerable cost to accessing the so-called "free support".

The Women's Library reported how they were looking at how people could buy into their service. The services they offer are information and support groups to help and support women.

Enable Scotland fed back that they had identified many ideas for the future and with ODS support had identified a method of working through these to prioritise action.

For ourselves we have moved forward with our whole Business Planning process which covers both these areas and more.

Want to take part in this year's Tall Ships race?

During a recent funding search (a new service being provided by Grampian Opportunities) funding was found that offered the opportunity for four individuals to apply for sponsorship to take part in this year's Tall Ships race.

The funder, **Jo Walters Trust** is sponsoring 4 people on the **Jubilee Sailing Trust's** training vessel, Lord Nelson.



There are places available for 2 disabled and 2 able-bodied people to be part of the Tall Ships race, sailing from Lerwick in Shetland to Aberdeen at the end of July. Anyone interested should contact Sarah@jst.org.uk Jubilee Sailing Trust www.jst.org.uk

Word search 2

Answer to the spring word search was Bunny. Here's your next challenge, Find the following words connected with a beach holiday in our word search grid. One word is not in the grid. Find the missing word.

BEACH	COCKTAIL	E	S	E	S	S	A	L	G	N	U	S	D
WAVES	SURFING	D	B	E	A	C	H	B	A	L	L	P	E
SANDCASTLES	BIKINI	S	W	I	M	S	U	I	T	W	A	D	C
SUNGLASSES	SANDALS	N	I	G	C	O	C	K	L	E	S	R	K
BUCKET	DECKCHAIR	B	L	K	O	G	N	I	F	R	U	S	C
SPADE	COCKLES	E	U	Y	S	E	A	N	T	U	T	I	H
SEA	PADDLING	A	P	C	B	T	O	I	S	Z	G	T	A
SUNHAT	BEACHBALL	C	D	E	K	W	E	E	F	I	W	A	I
SWIMSUIT	JET SKIS	H	A	C	A	E	S	J	D	V	I	H	R
		M	O	V	H	J	T	E	U	A	Q	N	X
		C	E	G	N	I	L	D	D	A	P	U	M
		S	A	N	D	C	A	S	T	L	E	S	K

Healthy Water!



Just how healthy are water based drinks?

Bottled drink makers make ever more remarkable claims for their products as to their health benefits.

There are claims to increase stamina, to improve concentration to rehydrate, to improve mineral and vitamin intake. To induce a good nights sleep, to improve happiness and reduce stress and improve your sex life! The words "fruit vitamins" and "minerals" equate to a good health association in our minds.

Looking at the labels tell a different story. The average 500ml bottle contains 41-53 grams of sugar, the equivalent of 5- 6 teaspoons of sugar. That is a very high calorific intake. It would seem that drinking coloured sugary water is far from healthy

However there is an alternative - good old tap water. If you do require a bit more flavour, try a slice of lemon or a teaspoon of maple syrup. It is a lot cheaper too.



Football charity cash

Eight volunteers were recruited through Grampian Opportunities to help collect money in aid of the Chest Heart and Stroke Association at a Premier football match between Aberdeen and Glasgow Rangers at Pittodrie in Aberdeen. The sum raised was £541.96

Aberdeenshire Council Direct Payments Steering Group

The Direct Payment Steering Group met on the 16th of March at Gordon House. Cornerstone who oversees the direct payments on a daily basis reported that there had been a small increase in the up take of direct payments.

They have secured some funding for training Personal Assistants. As a result course's on "Adult Support & Protection", are scheduled to be held in Ellon and Aberdeen.

A representative from Peninsula attended the meeting. They provide service users with advice regarding employment law. The company also deliver an information day called "Good Boss Safe Boss". The representative pointed out that it is very important that the service they provide is actually made use of.

Next on the agenda was the new PVG Registration Scheme. This will replace the current police checks which must be completed before employing Personal Assistants. It will be introduced gradually starting with new employees. The individual will be responsible for any fees and not the service user. It may well become a necessary condition of employment of future. A new list of companies who provide payroll services will be available soon.

The Chairperson of the steering group said that the government is introducing legislation to speed up the process of Self - Directed Support. All parties are in favour of this so it is not thought that the recent election will affect this.

MV award

Maurice is pictured presenting an MV award recognising 200 hours volunteering to GO's youngest volunteer. Kirstie has now been successful in gaining a college place to study hairdressing and is looking now to gain more experience in that area.



Carers Information Day

VSA Carers Support is holding an Information Day on Wednesday the 15th of June 2011, from 10am - 2pm, to coincide with National Carers Week

The day will include professional stands from organisations that operate in Central Aberdeenshire. There will also be bric-a-brac, a raffle, free refreshments and hopefully some local craft stalls. Venue:

Stewarts Hall (large community Hall in the centre of Huntly)

Further information from event organiser: Nic Breckon Tel: 01651 873953

From Little Acorns...



The main aim of Grampian Opportunities is to promote employability, develop enterprise and open up employment and volunteering opportunities for disabled people and people with mental health problems or long term conditions.

In March at our Annual planning sessions many of our volunteers identified they would like the opportunity to try different activities to meet new

people, learn new skills and improve their health and wellbeing.

Phyllis, who works with us one morning per week and volunteers another day, rose to the challenge of planning how we could do this. Martin who helps with Funding searches for ourselves and others identified who might support this work ... and together they have been successful in making an application to the ACORN Centre.

A grant from the centre will contribute to the cost of delivering a programme of taster session covering a range of activities suggested by our volunteers - such as arts and crafts, exercise, discussion group, alternative therapies, relaxation, diet and healthy eating.

If you feel you have a skill to share or feel you would benefit from taking part in any of the sessions planned we would be delighted to hear from you.

Give us a call at the office on Tel: 01467 629675 or email go.events@grampianopportunities.org.uk

Future Learning Opportunities



- 15 June, 22 June & 29 June – Mentor Training
- 15 June YODA Workshop
- 06 July FACEBOOK Workshop
- 13 July Portfolio sessions
- 17 August Gmail Workshop

Discussion session: 21 June: Independent Living – what it means to me.

Scottish Mentoring Network meeting in Elgin.

On the 3rd of May a few members of Grampian Opportunities went to Elgin to learn about other mentoring services. It was a very worthwhile trip, as we learnt that mentoring is being used in universities and is being used in organisations to help young people of 14 - 16 years of age.





Conference call

On the 16th of May. I was involved in the first telephone conference call which was dealing with values and practice within GO. There were several members present. I was unsure of what to expect, but it was an interesting experience. It was well led by Susanna and we were all given the opportunity to speak and raise issues relating to the topic of the day. I felt there were no problems with the technology and feedback has generally been positive, although there was not enough time to discuss everything. Community Networks has certainly brought lots of opportunities for learning and developing that will continue to inform how we integrate communication technology into the organisation – not as a replacement, but to add to the personal contact as a way of communicating which enhances our connection to GO and the New Explorations mentoring service.

Using the telephone for group calls has the potential to reduce the isolation some volunteers may experience due to difficulty travelling, bad weather conditions or illnesses. It also can reduce the energy levels required to take part fully in activities and reduce the cost of travel.

Websites	
Grampian Opportunities	www.grampianopportunities.org.uk
Scottish Human Rights	www.scottishhumanrights.com
Hardest Hit	www.hardesthit.org.uk
Community Planning	www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk
Dundee Access Group	www.dundeeaccessgroup.co.uk
Community Networks	www.community-network.org
Speak Up Speak Out	www.speakersbank.co.uk
Shared Care Scotland	www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk
Inspire Ventures	www.cafecoast.com
Chest Heart and Stroke	www.chss.org.uk
Jubilee Sailing Trust	www.jst.org.uk

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