

# MILL NEWS

## Winter 2010-11



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### ‘Amazingly confident!’ a Transitions story



Josh was referred to the Transitions Programme by his primary school. He tended to struggle with making new friends and found maths difficult. Thinking about secondary school was, he says, ‘Nerve-wracking...it was a big thing to be thinking about.’

enjoyed the zip wire and I was cheered and supported by friends.’

Now in year 7, Josh is positive about the future. He has plenty of friends from all year groups and is doing well with his work, including maths. He goes to lunch and after-school groups that Mary runs each week.

Before working with Mary he lacked confidence. Now, he says, ‘I feel amazingly confident. Without Romsey Mill I’d be a person needing help all the time to settle in.’

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Josh’s mum has noticed the difference in him and is pleased that he’s been able to get involved in school clubs.

Of course, there are still struggles but when there are, Josh says, ‘I know where to find Mary and I know she’ll help me.’



In year 6 he followed the transfer programme with Mary Simuyandi, Transitions Programme development worker, and with three other people from his class. They talked about the move to secondary school and worked through *Ready to Go*. The booklet, Josh says, ‘Made life a lot easier’ as it was an easy way to think about aspects of secondary school life.

The most worrying thing for Josh was the prospect of being with lots of people at The Manor whom he didn’t know and who might not become his friends. Transitions helped him with this by taking him on a residential to the Horstead Centre where he made friends with children from other primary schools who would be with him at The Manor.

The climbing wall and zip wire at Horstead were a challenge to Josh but, he says, ‘I trust Mary and she said it would be alright. I really

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## Words from the CEO



In the month leading up to Christmas, I've been sleeping outside in a tent (see the article below for why). Too bad for me that the temperatures shot down just as I started this!

It is cold and not too comfortable, but I know that by Christmas Eve I'll be back inside enjoying the comforts of family life. I also know that many of the people with whom Romsey Mill works do not have the security of a stable home and some live with the threat or reality of homelessness or being insecurely housed.

At this time of year as well, we're reminded that Jesus Christ left the beauty of heaven, choosing to share our humanness, and experiencing joy, discomfort and pain for a time. At Romsey Mill, we try to live out the incarnation of Christ—sharing the joys and trials of people who come here and supporting them to

become more fulfilled and giving members of society.

Like other service providers throughout the public and charitable sectors, Romsey Mill faces an uncertain time. We do not yet know how cuts in local government funding will affect our own. We're aware of colleagues in other agencies who face redundancy. We do know that a large central government grant ends in April, a grant that has enabled us greatly to expand our work with children, young people and families who face real disadvantage and distress.

We trust that God, who has no shortage of resources, will provide what Romsey Mill needs, and we're working to explore every possible source of funding.

But you could help. Our work is supported by some fantastic people who donate each month, providing us with a steady income that can be directed wherever the need is greatest. We would love to have more such supporters. If a hundred more people gave us £10 per month, that would add £12,000 to our secured income. If you can help, please contact us.

Happy Christmas! I'm looking forward to it.

## Neil Perry—the coldest challenge

While we experience sub-zero night-time temperatures, frost and snow, Neil Perry decided to spend thirty nights camping outdoors, coming back inside on 23rd December. This is Neil's contribution to our Year of Challenges: a series of sponsored events celebrating Romsey Mill's 30th birthday.

Neil's response to 'Why do this in winter?' is, 'I thought it would be more of a challenge, which will potentially raise more money for Romsey Mill's work. And many of the people with whom we work face severe, ongoing challenges and disadvantages.'



At the end of November he joined a group of students sleeping out on Parker's Piece in Cambridge to raise money for homeless charities.

There was little chance of

sleeping in the freezing temperatures, but lots of hot drinks and talk with people about Romsey Mill's work through the night hours.

Neil will donate 10% of whatever he raises to Jimmy's Nightshelter in Cambridge.

Neil camped in the snow at The Hayes Conference Centre, Derbyshire, while he and Malcolm Wylie, Chair of Trustees, attended a



leadership event there, and along with Martin Clarke, Romsey Mill supporter, spent one night in the garden of St Philip's Church.

The relevance of the challenge when a Romsey Mill staff member texted Neil, after his first night sleeping out, that he had arranged accommodation for a young person who would otherwise have spent the night sleeping rough for real. Money Neil raises will enable us to continue vital work like this with young people who find themselves facing crises for which they are unprepared and unsupported.

Neil's challenge has been seen on Look East, heard on Radio Cambridgeshire, and featured in Cambridge News.

To help Neil reach his target of £3,000, visit <http://www.justgiving.com/Neil-Perry> or ring Romsey Mill on 01223 566492 to make your pledge.

## Getting the message



25th November each year is the UN's designated International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Some young women at a Romsey Mill group have been focusing attention on this issue.

They met a women's refuge worker from Cambridge, and talked with Natalie Hutchison, author of *Trading Places: how one woman took control of her life*, which includes harrowing descriptions of neglect and violence as well as how she started her own business and changed her life.

Some of the young women have completed the Freedom Programme—a course dealing with the issues that contribute to domestic violence.

The young women designed a badge to mark the UN's day and have been distributing them to friends and family. Pick up yours from Romsey Mill.

## Pricewaterhouse Coopers

Romsey Mill is PwC's Charity of the Year and our colleagues there have been very active in fundraising for us.



Their latest event was the Cambridge to Cambridge Bike Ride. Staff cycled, walked and ran the equivalent of the distance between Cambridge UK and Cambridge US, raising about £5000. This is great news for us and an impressive effort from all at PwC.

Volunteers from PwC helped out at the Mill Road Winter Fair, serving tea and coffee to visitors who dropped in to see what we do at Romsey Mill.

### YPP staff hold the baby

Four YPP staff are each looking after a virtual baby for a week in January. The 'baby' will need the usual baby care including night-time feeding.

To add your support to this challenge, log on to <http://www.justgiving.com/YPP>

## YPP—best youth project in the eastern region

Romsey Mill's Young Parents Programme (YPP) has been declared the best youth project in the East of England by judges of this year's Philip Lawrence Awards. The awards celebrate outstanding contributions made by 11-20-year-olds in their community and challenge unfair negative stereotypes of young people.

The Programme was presented with its certificate by PLANet youth ambassador and judge Lisa Lane, who met young people from the 'Bumps and Babies group' in November.

The awards were set up in memory of head teacher Philip Lawrence who was murdered outside his school in December 1995, and recognise the amazing difference young people make in our communities.

Over 200 nominations were received this year from all over the UK, and a judging panel of young people, all former winners themselves, chose the 35 groups that have been recognised as finalists for their regions.

Lisa Lane, PLANet youth ambassador, and member of the judging panel said: 'I won an award in 2006 for my involvement in a young parents group, so I was particularly impressed to see what the young people at Romsey Mill have achieved - the home visits, the work with young fathers and the development of their own skills and confidence. Young parents are often

judged negatively, so it's really important to recognise groups like this that show they can achieve and can give something back by supporting others.'

Frances Lawrence, widow of Philip Lawrence and founder of the awards, says, 'The young people involved in the Young Parents Programme at Romsey Mill show compassion for others, understanding of their problems, and determination to change things for the better.'

YPP is shaped by its participants and young people are involved in helping each other to acquire skills and in supporting each other, decreasing isolation and improving the well being of families.



## Children's Centre Santas



Rachel Matthews, Family Involvement Work Coordinator, said that the road was 'awash with orange balloons' as two hundred were handed out to children and families, along with information leaflets.

The team spoke to lots of families, many of whom had not previously known about the Children's Centre.

Rachel Bennett, Children's Centre Manager, had the chance to visit the mosque on Mawson Road and talk with families. Leaflets left there will help to ensure that families attending the mosque know how to access the variety of groups and activities on offer at Romsey Mill and across the Children's Centre reach area.

Children's Centre staff made sure that young families out enjoying Mill Road Winter Fair heard about the groups and activities available at Romsey Mill Children's Centre.

**Hug a hoody!** The hoodies modelled here are available for sale at Romsey Mill, along with T-shirts and polo shirts. Keep warm and support Romsey Mill!

## New lunch club for Playgroup

Since September 2010 Playgroup has extended to 15 hours per week. We are now open Monday to Friday from 9.15am – 11.45am and until 1.00pm on Mondays and Fridays.

Playgroup staff planned lots of good activities for the extra session but the children have set the agenda instead!

We have up to eight children bringing their packed lunches, with parents becoming expert and creative in providing healthy foods. The children enjoy sitting at the table to eat together: they are becoming very chatty and sociable with each other and the staff. They often choose an activity together afterwards and more often than not they can be found in the home

corner, dressing up or involved in role play. Their imaginations run away with them.

This has been great for the quieter boys who attend lunch club, who are emerging from their shells.



An additional benefit is that friendships amongst parents and children have grown and been consolidated as they spend this extra time together.

## Increased access to Playgroup



Government funding for early years learning and childcare means that from this year Playgroup is able to offer funding for two-year-old children whose families meet specific

assessment criteria, mainly based on types of benefits families might receive.

This is a wonderful provision for at least six families using Playgroup who might not otherwise have been

able to afford it, even though we keep our fees as low as we can.

For some families the funding means their child can attend more sessions than they had originally hoped. For others it's made the difference between having a place or not. And for the children it means learning, fun and meeting friends.

Most of these children will continue to receive funding as three-year-olds from January and we hope that a new group of families with two-year-olds will be able to access the positive experience of Playgroup without financial worry.

## Hail, rain, fog...this must be Snowdon

Eleven members of Romsey Mill's Step-up educational project climbed Snowdon at the end of October. Some had never left Cambridgeshire before: 'I'd never seen a mountain before and never thought I'd climb one.'

Battling against rain, hail and strong winds the undaunted 15-16-year-olds pressed on to the summit at 1085 metres and warmed up with hot chocolate before making a quick descent with the guidance of Plas-y-Brenin instructors.

Reflecting on their challenging outdoor venture, the young people were justly pleased with what they had achieved and hope that more money can be raised as a result. One team member said, '**Sometimes I thought I couldn't go on, but I kept going and was pleased to make it.**'

Staff with the young people were impressed by their determination. Conditions were very poor and they persevered, supporting and encouraging each other along the way. It was a shame there was no view from the top to reward them!



## Social Inclusion Programme in Sawston



Since September, Nicky Murray, a youth development worker in the Social Inclusion Programme, has been extending Romsey Mill's work into Sawston. Working alongside colleagues in other agencies who already work in Sawston with young

people, and with partner churches, she has been meeting young people and assessing where gaps in provision exist and how we can help to fill them.

Through detached outreach sessions three times a week, Nicky has met about sixty young people, mainly in the 16+ age group which is currently under-provided for.

She says, 'Among the young people I'm working with, I've come across some drug misuse, and a significant number of people I've met are out of education and work. They don't have access to the same opportunities as young people in the city.' The young people need to have increased motivation and hope for the future.'

But some of the young men are keen on starting a

music group and have been into Romsey Mill for DJ-ing sessions. Nicky is hoping to start a regular group at a church building in Sawston as a starting point for youth work that will address issues and support these young people in making progress.

A babysitting course is planned for January in partnership with the County Council Locality Team in Sawston.

Nicky is keen to make this project sustainable. Everyone in the sector is aware of possible funding cuts and is keen to ensure that provision stays in place for vulnerable young people. So agencies refer young people to other service providers where there is a need that can be better met by colleagues elsewhere and we try to use local buildings, such as church halls, for projects.

A recent graduate of the Centre for Youth Ministry, Nicky is excited about developing her own 'patch' where she can pioneer Romsey Mill's work, building on the experience she gained while a placement student with us during her time at CYM.

### What's your legacy?

**Could you leave a gift in your will to Romsey Mill?** A legacy gift is **exempt from tax** and may keep you below the inheritance tax threshold. You may therefore prefer to choose a good cause for your money than to give 40% of your estate in tax. We know you will want to put family and friends first, but **remembering Romsey Mill in your will can help to maintain and develop our work** with vulnerable children, young people and families. Contact Damian Mitchell on 01223 566492 or [damian.mitchell@romseymill.org](mailto:damian.mitchell@romseymill.org) for more information.

## Education at Romsey Mill—Kickstart and Step-up



Kickstart is a new Romsey Mill course for young people beyond school age who find themselves not in Education, employment or training.

It kicked off in the October half term with a two-and-a-half day intensive programme where young people gained skills and accreditation in

Emergency First Aid as well as certificates in Food Hygiene at level 1. This included a cooking session and some delicious pizzas!

The course took in plenty of games as well as training in how to do well at interview and the opportunity to set targets for the future. It is continuing with a group

meeting once a week to focus on responding to the individual needs of those who come. So far this has covered writing CVs, making applications, and hands-on job searching.

Meanwhile, Step-up has entered its second year with longer-term courses for 15-16-year-olds who struggle to stay in mainstream education: Uniformed Services, Catering, Sports Leadership and the Arts Award.

Romsey Mill staff and friends happily supported catering course students who transformed the Jordan Bar into a café, serving a delicious range of home-made soup and bread rolls. Students have also learned skills such as animation, football coaching and babysitting.

Step-up and Kickstart are supported by our Progressions Worker who can help young people plan the next stage of their development, whether into further education, training or work.

## Juicy Juice Bar at YPP Health Fair



The Jordan Bar was transformed into 'Judith's Juicy Juice Bar' as part of a Health Fair organized by the Young Parents Programme. Healthy snacks and fruity cocktails were available and young parents were encouraged to enter a prize draw by designing a healthy meal on a paper plate.

The event, attended by eleven other agencies including representatives from JCP, Midwifery, Health Visitors, Health Start and Cambridge Foodbank took place in the sports hall. There were stalls promoting healthy messages, giving out advice and freebies along with opportunities for young parents to find out about how to keep themselves and their children healthy. Parents talked to professionals about sexual health and screening, dental hygiene, giving up smoking and baby care.

Health visitors attending commented, 'Having lots of

stalls made it an interesting and attractive event for parents – an excellent opportunity for health promotion.'

***'Having lots of stalls made it an interesting and attractive event for parents – an excellent opportunity for health promotion.'***

Forty-two young mums and six dads attended with their children. Rachel Briant, Development Worker, and Fair coordinator, said, 'I was encouraged to see so many young parents attending and to have the support of other agencies. It was a hive of activity and there was a real buzz during the event.'



## Wear it, love it, share it



Romsey Mill's Charity Shop took part in a 'Wear it, love it, share it' afternoon organised by Recycling in Cambridge and Peterborough (RECAP).

The event included a fashion show, second-hand clothing for sale, pampering treatments and beauty photos. Sewing workshops equipped visitors to make the most of the second-hand purchases, and children's activities meant that everyone was entertained.

Held at the Brown's Field Youth and Community Centre in Chesterton, the afternoon attracted a hundred guests to enjoy the work represented by four charities. The organisers hope that it will help to decrease the volume of textiles going into landfill by promoting the practice of donating to charity shops and buying from them as well.

We will be monitoring our sales and donations to see the longer term benefit of the event.



## A week in the life of an Aspire CYM student



*Avril Timson is in the second year of a degree course at the Centre for Youth Ministry, Ridley Hall. Based with our Aspire Programme, she explains her role at Romsey Mill.*

### What are you doing at the Centre for Youth Ministry?

I'm taking a degree in Youth and Community Work and Practical Theology. I spend fourteen hours a week on placement with Romsey Mill and three days studying, either in lectures, seminars or private study. Once a fortnight we have a discussion group where we think through how faith affects our work, like what the Trinity says about relationships.

### How do you use your time at Romsey Mill?

This year, I'm mainly working with the Aspire Programme (with young people with autistic spectrum conditions, or ASCs) and I help Kate with a couple of young women's groups in the Social Inclusion Programme. I help to run the weekly Aspire clubs.

### What goes on at Aspire clubs?



The young people choose the activities – things they're interested in. At one group, they enjoy drama so they're often acting out

sketches. They play sport, pool, or go on the Wii;

some of the young people enjoy drawing and cooking. They often sit and chat with other club members or with the staff and volunteers. And of course, we start sessions with the famous Aspire toasties.

### What changes have you seen in the young people going to the clubs?

It's inspiring to see the way they have begun to interact with each other and form friendships. Having great volunteers has helped this to happen – good models to follow and encouragement to include everybody and be aware when someone might be feeling on the edge of things.

### What are you learning through your work?

I'm learning a lot about ASCs and how to engage young people who may respond in a number of ways. I enjoy the groups because the young people are so welcoming. Being on placement at Romsey Mill is great because I experience a variety of youth work situations – detached, activity-based groups, educational groups.

### Tell us about future plans for Aspire.

Next term we're going to pilot a Living Skills course for young people with ASCs who are 16+. They'll finish with certificates in First Aid and in Food Hygiene as well as learning skill for independent living such as money management, cooking and doing the laundry. If it's successful we'll be running the course on a rolling programme.

**Did you know?** 71% of young people with ASCs develop mental health problems, in comparison with 10% in other children. (Source: NAS)

## Farewells and welcomes



**Emily Barton** is on maternity leave from her post as Progressions Worker in YPP. We look forward to hearing news of the new Baby Barton.

**Christina Hatfield** is covering Emily's maternity leave, having been a YPP volunteer for some time.



**Mandy Bediako** has joined the Children's Centre team as Early Years Development Worker.

**Marion Saunders** has joined us as a trustee.

A big welcome to these new members of the Romsey Mill team.



## Mill Road Winter Fair

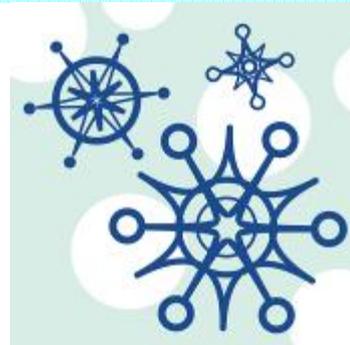
This ever-popular community event took place on 4th December and Romsey Mill joined with shops, businesses and places of worship to welcome people in.

Staff and volunteers served 120 drinks to visitors who also enjoyed delicious cakes donated by PwC, while a DVD about Romsey Mill ran in the background.

And a similar number of children bounced off some energy on the bouncy castle, before getting their faces painted by Sadie Few.

The sports hall was filled with stalls selling beautiful crafts, Christmas gifts and books and the building was busy with visitors all day.

**New baby!** Congratulations to David Shuler, development worker with SIP, and his wife Zoe, on the birth of their baby Elijah in October.



## Ellie above it all



Ellie Howes, Transitions Programme coordinator, jumped from 16500 feet, in New Zealand, to raise money for Romsey Mill. Ellie's hands say, 'I ♥ Romsey Mill.'

## Of funding cuts and the future

Funding cuts to public spending budgets are much in the news. In addition, from April, the amount charities can reclaim in Gift Aid will be reduced by 2%. Also in April, major central government funding, which has allowed us to expand our work over the past eighteen months, comes to an end.

We are working hard at Romsey Mill to explore every possible source of funding so that the vulnerable people with whom we work will still have access to projects, and relationships with workers that support them.

**If you do not currently support our work, either in time, prayer or money, please consider doing so. A hundred people donating ten pounds a month would give £12,000 to our work. You can download a form from [www.romseymill.org/donations](http://www.romseymill.org/donations)**

**Romsey Mill is a Christian charity dedicated to creating opportunities for change with young people, children and families in Cambridgeshire—including teenage parents, young people with autism, families with small children, and young people experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.**

**You can donate online to support our work at [www.romseymill.org/donations](http://www.romseymill.org/donations). Thank you for your support.**

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