

Skillshops 2 End of Project Summary

We were delighted to work with Awards for All to deliver this wonderful project. Our focus, as with Skillshops 1, was building community across the city. Through extending and strengthening our relationships with local community groups; growing skills and supporting friendships; and by promoting volunteering. This shared our principles to grow not only food, but also our community.

photo

What did we do?

In total, we delivered 30 workshops between June and December 2018. 15 devoted to increasing gardening skills and another 15 focussing on crafting skills to promote mental wellbeing.

Gardening: Working throughout the summer through to late autumn, our informal, interactive sessions allowed us to share skills, from learning how to prepare the ground for planting, making compost and to championing the importance of wildlife to the garden environment.

Gardening sessions were held in the Southsea Green community garden and also with our friends at John Pounds Centre, in their Treadgold's garden. We shared how easily food can be grown, even in an urban environment, by utilising small spaces, such as windowsills and even the humble bucket on a balcony.

Gardening activities were not exclusively about food. We also offered a variety of garden related crafts, such as willow weaving. The objectives of these crafts were to help improve mental wellbeing and were, weather permitting, largely conducted in our tranquil community garden at canoe lake. We were pleased to offer a workshop called plant superheroes, which allowed us to share benefits of using plants for healing and to make drinks and salves for burns, so showing the versatile nature of plants and how they can be used in multiple areas of our lives.

Photo

Crafting: Alongside gardening, we arranged craft sessions with a focus on mental health and wellbeing which built on activities around sustainability, established in the gardening workshops.

We learned how to use items, that previously might have been destined for landfill, with ideas to recycle, revive and refresh. We made new from old and spent time transforming items.

Many of our workshops across both genres were intergenerational and were particularly rewarding, watching old and young coming together to create and seeing families working together. We made scarecrows, enjoyed Christmas crafts, we sang and played the drums and were rewarded by shiny happy faces of people enjoying simple tasks using their hands and spending time away from the ubiquitous computer screens.

Photo

Building on these integrated workshop ideas, we involved a local group called Creative Advances, who work with adults who have learning difficulties. This organisation has similar objectives to our own focussing on clients' health and wellbeing. It was great to see their members embracing activities. Of particular enjoyment were sessions we ran spending time reflecting, whilst creating beautiful sound on mini harps.

Harp photo of them loving it

We also worked with a dementia group run by Pompey in the Community, to run a memories workshop which was very enlightening and popular with both carers and their families. Still on a health and growing theme, we ran healthy eating and cookery sessions, supporting diabetics and sharing ideas with the Southsea Green and foodcycle communities. We shared a healthy meal, cooked by our participants, which was a lovely social event, even including the washing up.

Who benefitted?

The varied programme of activities and taster sessions made our workshops appealing to a wide range of participants and brought along new people. Funded sessions were accessible to all and it was a pleasure to introduce the sessions as fully funded by Awards for All, dressing the venues with the promotional bunting, and other materials. There were broad smiles as some of the lottery magic was sprinkled throughout the community. Southsea Green has a huge facebook ad local media following, and regular posts and updates on that page, information on our websites, and a dedicated Skillshops facebook page, set up for the duration of the project helped to spread the word about our project.

Screenshot of webpage

Over 180 people attended. Some attended more than one, and our growers and crafter leaders enjoyed being involved, sharing their skills and building relationships. All ages came along from

babies through to 93, and we had a mix of working, retired, toddler, school age and student participants. Some were people living alone, and although we did not formally collect data we found people opened up about loneliness, anxiety and depression in the relaxed environment.

What did they say about our workshops?

Growing/Gardening sessions:

- Sense of satisfaction watching the bird feeder start to spiral and also having pieces to take home finished. It's been great fun, thank you.
- I enjoyed...
- "...learning about the uses and how to grow them myself".
- lovely, inspirational presentation. Clearly structured and easy to follow/understand. Enjoyed testing/tasting the products".
- Variety of plants & uses. Tasting".

Harp and singing sessions:

- *Enjoyed this workshop so much, lifted my spirits*
- *Feeling full of joy after the singing workshop*
- *A beautiful crescendo of sound, harps are angels with strings*

Bicycle maintenance session:

- *Excellent, practical workshop, my wife's bike's much better*
- *Thank you, after eight years I know how to fold my folding bike.*
- *Brill, learnt so much and so easy.*

Treasure map session:

- *Such a nice activity, therapeutic and brings us all together*
- *Didn't know I had this creativity in me, therapeutic and fun*

Suncatcher session:

- *Absolutely wonderful, really, really enjoyed it*
- *Great fun, such lovely people.*

Cooking for healthy eating sessions:

- *Was fun to mix with new people and share a morning cooking, great fun*
- *Food was delicious, interesting chat about food and ingredients and vitamins, thank you*
- *Plenty of wonderful vegetables, eating a rainbow.*

Drumming intergenerational drop in session:

"Great event, 15 Drums and drummers giving fantastic show and display of their sounds. Crowds gathered enjoying the renditions and the children joining in, beating the play drums provided were a wonderful sight. Parents taking photos of their children and the little ones were delightful. Adults too practising on the real drums with great enthusiasm, all bringing friendship

and Community togetherness with interest anew. Even myself, 85 years and my friend Pat, 93 years, enjoyed the experience being welcomed into the 'fold '. Thank you....”

We are happy to have had this opportunity to work with Awards for All. It has enabled Southsea Greenhouse skillshops to deliver a unique project right across the community. Grateful thanks from all at Southsea Greenhouse, we really enjoyed this project.

We welcome all our past participants to our get togethers at the community garden and will share any events we arrange in the coming season.