

AN URGENT APPEAL FOR YOUR HELP - NOT MONEY, BUT ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT

PLEASE GIVE US A FEW HOURS OF YOUR TIME - OTHERWISE NO FESTIVAL !!

Dear Friends

As you know, 2014 was a very good year for us :

- yet another excellent Blythe Hill Festival on 4 July, with crowds of our neighbours enjoying with us the stalls, the music and the children's play provision - spoilt only by the downpour of rain which shut it all down prematurely at 3.10 p.m. ;
- the award of a Lottery grant of almost £10,000 for a Trim Trail, which will provide simple gymnastic equipment round the upper edge of the park (back of Montacute and Bankhurst Roads), as part of a defined jogging route round the whole perimeter ;
- the first two phases of our volunteer programme of Tree Planting to replace all the Glendale trees of three years ago which died, purchased at Glendale's expense from a specialist tree nursery : 16 trees planted by adopting families on 22 March opposite the playground, another 15 (with different adopters) planted on 15 November towards Brockley View.
- hedge maintenance and new hedge planting on various Saturday mornings as part of a new eco-friendly vision for the park, with thickly planted boundaries and some substantial wild-life corners. (Not to forget night-time bat walks !)
We have proved again and again that people will come out in great numbers, very often with children as well, to carry out satisfying practical tasks, and 2015 should be no different, with the third phase of tree planting and the wild-life work.

SO WHY ARE WE IN CRISIS ? WHY DO WE NEED MORE HELP FROM YOU - AT LEAST FROM FIVE OR SIX OF YOU ?

The answer is simple : we need to organize. None of these great things happen automatically. They happen because people make them happen. And they happen much more easily - so that they are not an impossibly boring-snoring blanket of bureaucracy, if the work can be shared around amongst many, instead of silting up around the necks of one or two.

How do we do this ?

We need to play to our strengths - and, demographically, our strength in the communities around Blythe Hill is that we can tap into the skills of able and optimistic people in the age group of 35-50, and we have been fortunate in the past eight years in achieving exactly that - hence the dynamism of our Festival, of our plans for improving the park (as the rebuilt playground bears witness) and, most recently, of our 'People and Wildlife' strategies.

The weakness, however, is that this is the age group with the highest turnover of change - promotions at work, jobs moving elsewhere in the country, burdens of childcare (and elderly care), pressures of property prices, and so on. It isn't surprising that one moment we are surfing high on the energy of teamwork, only for gaps and holes suddenly to threaten the whole fabric.

That is precisely the kind of downturn that threatens us at this moment. Our efficient Secretary, Leo Stevens, has changed firms and been promoted into higher workload ; our brilliant Festival Organizer, Marcel Jenkins, has picked himself up successfully from redundancy but is having to focus on his new career path ; one of the hardest working in our Festival team, Jo Ireland, has had to resettle her family around her husband's new job

at Northampton ; and our eco-expert Zaria Greenhill happily given birth to her firstborn on Boxing Day.....

So, not surprisingly, our AGM on 10 December, was sparsely attended and suddenly filled with gloom over our ability to deliver our aims this year. Clearly the main problem is this year's Festival. Last year's organizer, Hugh Brown, though personally up for it again, cannot do it all on his own, so we immediately need a commitment from three or four people to assist him in such tasks as firming up commitments from stallholders ; ensuring that the fun fair, the children's activities and the toilets are all confirmed and budgeted for ; liaising on the music programme, both with Gavin Bolam and the professional groups, and with local amateur choirs ; and talking persuasively with potential funders.

OUR NEXT FRIENDS' MEETING ON THURSDAY 29 JANUARY at the HONOR OAK PUB in BROCKLEY RISE MUST BE SEEN AS AN ESSENTIAL RALLYING POINT FOR ALL OF US WHO WANT THIS YEAR'S FESTIVAL TO GO AHEAD.

PLEASE COME TO THE MEETING AND SHARE WITH US YOUR IDEAS

Best Wishes

NICHOLAS TAYLOR

Chair, Friends of Blythe Hill Fields

Don't hesitate to ring me with your ideas / offers (020-8690-6492 / 07736-705116),

if you can't be with us on the 29th ; or email me at njwytaylor@hotmail.co.uk ; or drop in for a chat at 62 Duncombe Hill (corner of Brockley View).
You are also welcome to join our Facebook page found here: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/10388387145/>