

Style Acre

Supporting people with learning disabilities



STORIES WINTER 2021

A message from Chris Ingram, CEO

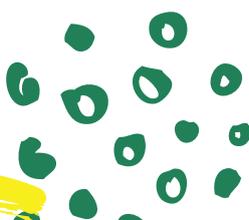
I can't believe we are heading into another Christmas dominated by Covid and all the worries and uncertainty associated with it. After a relatively normal Summer and Autumn things have taken a turn for the worse. The teams at Style Acre have done an amazing job at keeping people safe, supported, and living as full a life as possible, but we have found it increasingly difficult to recruit staff and this is putting huge pressure on colleagues. This is not a Style Acre issue; it is a national one and sadly seems to be largely ignored by Government. Whilst Oxfordshire County Council acknowledge the difficult situation providers like us are in there is little they seem able to do to help. December is always the worst month for recruitment, and we hope all the new things we are trying will pay dividends in January.

Our Christmas programme of events has been severely impacted as we don't feel it is responsible to be hosting large indoor parties. However, yet again people have been so creative, inventive, and resourceful and have gone the extra mile to make sure the build up to Christmas is as fun and festive as possible. It was great to be able to hold our Wallingford Santa Dash again and see so many people come out to have fun and support our work.

Thank you for your ongoing support and understanding and I wish you all a safe and wonderful Christmas and a very happy 2022.

Festive greetings

Chris

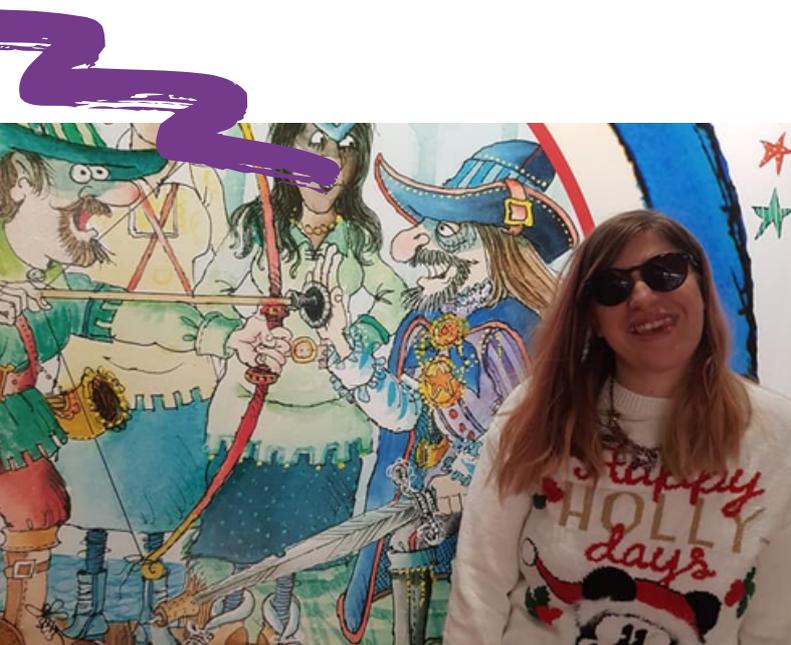


Christmas Activities



T2 have been taking part in this year's Christmas Tree Festival at St Andrew's Church, East Hagbourne. The theme for the tree's this year was 'Pantomime' and the T2 ladies group had been busy since November crafting some lovely themed decorations to use on the tree from Snow White, a magic mirror to a poisoned apple the ideas the group came up with were great.

This year everyone seems to be visiting Blenheim Palace and their Nutcracker themed magical Christmas lights. The cold didn't stop anyone and Littleworth, Bryan Way, Grace and many more have all ventured there to see the wonderful displays and magically lit pathways. It was a great reason to stay out late and made everyone feel very Christmassy.



There have been a few trips to pantomimes this year. From Beauty and the Beast to Robin Hood there have been quite a mixture of stories being told! Nicole, along with Christina and Ricky, had a great time watching Robin Hood at the Oxford Playhouse.

Santa and his grotto arrived at Howbery Park last week. The elves had been working hard to make sure everything was prepared for the people we support to come along and visit Santa this year. With decorated trees, a fire and magical lights the elves pulled out all the stops to make the grotto festive and comfy for Santa and his visitors.



T2 Mens Group

The Men's group have been back in action this year after being completely stopped in lockdown. From the ski slopes...to the original home of Formula One racing...



To adventures with Bear Grylls... to meeting "royalty"!



Chris Woodley leads the planning and co-ordination, supported by Claire Noble And Carol Choules. They are all looking forward to more adventures next year!

Day Opportunities

After emerging from lockdowns in early 2021, our day hubs gradually restarted many old and new activities. By the summer months people were raring to get back out into the world and started back in activities like bowling, swimming, karate, horse riding and, importantly for so many, seeing friends. The summer was full of wonderful trips to wildlife parks, the seaside, and waterparks. People supported through our Community Support team had some wonderful shopping days out, holidays at the seaside and a great boat trip on the Thames.

Dancing and creativity is back in a big way with Turnstyle resuming its music and dance session (even if smaller than pre pandemic!), T2 back Zumba-ing and Cherwell Theatre company running some drama workshops at SABRe.

It has been wonderful to see work placements resuming and new placements starting. People have loved returning to their roles and seeing familiar faces again.

Everyone is now very much looking forward to Christmas, and although plans have been scaled back a touch, the teams have been working creatively to do some lovely activities with everyone - from wonderful arts and craft projects to Christingle services to Christmas quizzes.

Events and Fundraising News

We've been lucky enough to get back to some fun face-to-face fundraising events this year, from challenge events like Bike Oxford and the Oxford Half Marathon to our 'First Class Pooch' dog show, Outdoor Cinema and of course the Santa Dash.



Bike Oxford, Sun 10th July

Our first real-life event after Covid and a team of 11 cyclists took on Bike Oxford. The team was made up of supporters, staff and people we support who took on either 25,50, or 80 miles around the Oxfordshire countryside. As a team they collectively cycled 495 miles and raised over £4,000.

The London Marathon, Sun 3rd Oct

This year we had two places in the London Marathon a first for Style Acre. We asked Chris Ingram and Grace to take on the challenge (which they happily accepted.) After months of training both were excited and nervous about the day and the 26.2 miles ahead of them. They ran the Marathon with enthusiasm and determination and of course they both completed it in style! Everyone at Style Acre and our supporters were so proud of them. Not only did they take on this challenge they raised an outstanding £6,064.



Oxford Half Marathon, Sun 17th Oct

Twelve people made up the Style Acre Oxford Half Marathon team including supporters, staff and people we support. Some of them took on this challenge and ran 13.1 miles for the first time! They all did us proud as they crossed the line to collect their medals. It was a great atmosphere and we are looking forward to doing it again next year. The team raised just over £5,300.

Wallingford Santa Dash, Sun 5th Dec

Our 5th Wallingford Santa Dash and first back since Covid was a huge success. On a dry but cold 5th of December around 300 adults, children and four legged friends dashed through the streets and parks of Wallingford, raising money for Style Acre! We were so pleased to see so many people taking part and having festive fun. Thank you to everyone who took part, volunteered or cheered us all along. The Santa Dash raised over £2400.



Raffle Prizes Request!

Have you got any unwanted Christmas presents? Or maybe you're having a spring clean? We're on the lookout for raffle/tombola prizes for our 2022 events. If you have any unused, quality items you'd like to donate, please contact Lisa Hanton lhanton@styleacre.org.uk



2022 Events

We have a fantastic programme of events planned for next year! Dates to be confirmed but our upcoming events include:

- Auction of Promises - Feb 2022
- Bowling Event - March 2022
- Superhero Colour Fun Run - June 2022
- Wellness Festival - July 2022
- Bike Oxford - July 2022
- Outdoor Cinema / Festival - August 2022
- Masquerade Ball - October 2022
- London Marathon - October 2022
- Oxford Half Marathon - October 2022
- Drive through Cinema - November 2022
- Santa Dash - December 2022

We will also be having a number of smaller events and even online events for you to get involved in, so keep an eye out for your invites. **Our big fundraising event in 2022 will be the Masquerade Ball in October - more details will follow soon.**

Work Programme



Rob has just started cleaning at the Fitness and Wellbeing Hub and in return Tom Shaw the manager have given him free membership which will help him get fit.

Rob used to work at a gym in Abingdon but unfortunately that finished because of Covid and he was not able to return. Here is a photo of Rob working hard at the gym cleaning the equipment.

The Fitness and Wellbeing Hub is a very special gym it doesn't just help you keep your body fit it helps you keep your mind fit, as well as helping people to cope with anxiety. They are also offering a discounted membership for Style Acre staff.

Wantage Market Garden

It's been a busy year at the Wantage garden! We started the year with a polytunnel full of early flowering annuals, all sown and planted by our gardeners. After the annuals came a range of vegetables and salads all sown from seed, and nurtured by our team of gardeners and volunteers.

This year we also took part in the Oxfordshire Pumpkin Festival. Several houses grew pumpkins for the first time, and at Wantage the gardeners were proud of the range of pumpkins and squash they grew, including 'Snoopy' a 9kg snake gourd!

We have also developed a new leaflet, a lovely logo featuring dotty wellies and have new smart polo shirts for the team.

There have been plant sales, arts and crafts workshops, a summer BBQ to say thank you to our garden volunteers, mindfulness walks, and a Christmas sale and wreath-making. We have continued to work in close partnership with Sustainable Wantage, and have appreciated their support to produce hedgehog houses and bird boxes for Style Acre houses, as part of our Wild Acre project.

A highlight of the year was Mark Ebsworth unveiling a beautiful mosaic he made for the garden during lockdown, called 'Red Kite in Flight' (pictured).

The Wantage garden is a happy, productive garden and very appreciated by the many people who use it.



Ways to Wellness

We've organised activities like tennis, football, canoeing and gym tasters, shared healthy eating recipes and trained staff in Good Nutrition, connected with nature and grown our own produce, given everybody a wellness journal, and had monthly themed activities bringing people together virtually and in real life. We've seen Ways to Wellness buddies build their friendships, and we have increased our focus on mental and emotional health.

There has been a lot of Growing, Mov(e)ing, Nourishing and Connecting happening!

We are also excitedly planning our first ever Wellness Festival in July 2022 (17th/18th).



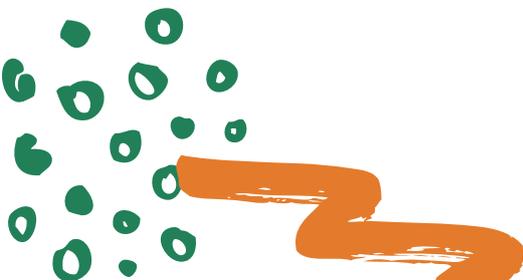
Mental Health at Style Acre

As part of our Ways to Wellness programme, we have been able to train up 25+ colleagues at Style Acre as Mental Health First Aiders. They have learnt skills to be a first point of contact for anyone experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress. From next year, we plan to introduce Mental Health Awareness for all staff, and build on the skills of our Mental Health First Aiders.



Anyone for Tennis?

We've started an exciting partnership with Blewbury Tennis Club this year. Not only did we get to meet Tim Henman at our joint 'Lights On' event, but after a couple of successful taster sessions we've started weekly accessible tennis sessions at the club. These are led by Blewbury's fantastic coach, Tom, who makes the sessions really fun! We plan to continue and expand these sessions, offering them out to the wider learning disability community too in 2022.



Social Enterprises

Charity Shop

Joao has had a busy year in the shop, restrictions have increased our donations to record breaking levels. Joao has worked hard to encourage the people we support back into work and we now have a full team of work placements. A big thank you to Carla who has started to work on Saturdays in the shop, which has enabled us to open new placements on Saturdays too. Thank you Joao and Carla.



Green Acre

Through rain or shine (restrictions allowing) our Green Acre team have continued to work in the gardens of our supported living houses. Led by Sarah and Barry, the team continues to learn new gardening skills, show commitment and dedication to their job resulting in gardens anyone would be proud of. Their hard work makes such a difference to our houses and the people we support who can enjoy them all year round.

Tearoom

We said goodbye and thank you to Tracy this year, who stepped down from her position as Tearoom Manager and welcomed Charmaine, Tearoom Manager and Charlotte, Assistant Manager. They had big boots to fill but have risen to the challenge. They could not do this without their fantastic team consisting of the people we support, support workers, tearoom assistants and of course our loyal volunteers.

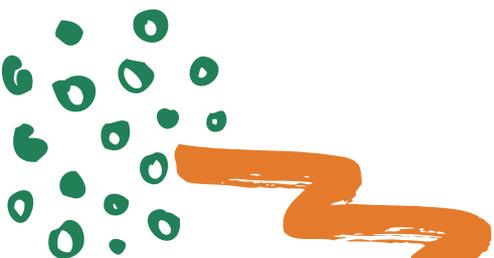
Let's talk about the cakes! The bakers at T2 have amazed us with the quality and variety of cakes baked weekly for the tearoom, thank you to Kate at T2 and all the bakers and support staff who dream up new cake ideas and deliver them weekly.

In the last edition of Style Acre Stories, we shared with you Jess and Caroline's Crowdfunder which raised £3890. We have been shopping and purchased a new larger marquee to seat more customers. Thank you to Emma, a Style Acre supporter for loaning us the interim marquee and our team of helpers who came along to put the new one up!



2021 In Pictures

There were so many great things happening in 2021 that we couldn't write about them all so here's a snap shot of all the fun that has happened this year!



From everyone at Style Acre



Thank you Jamie, Chris and Cowley house for your lovely Christmas board!