



## Who's Who in ICT?

**I**t has often been said that efficient ICT is the key to success, and while it can never replace the skills and personalities of dedicated staff, it is certainly an extremely useful tool.

At Community First the ICT team has recently grown, as a result of securing funding for some exciting new projects.

### What can the ICT team do for you?

Inevitably, the answer depends on where you work and what sort of organisation you represent. Heading up the team is Sian Basker who has been with Community First for the past three years. Sian set up the Herefordshire In Touch project for the voluntary sector, (see [www.itshere.org.uk](http://www.itshere.org.uk)) and her job is now about developing ICT strategy and managing the team. Her current challenge is to find funding for ICT support services in Worcestershire, since current provision is considerably biased in Herefordshire's favour. However, with interests at regional and national as well as local level, she is well placed to undertake the task.

Matt Ramsay is Community First's ICT Officer who maintains the computer networks, servers and systems. However, he also works with Herefordshire in Touch, supporting other voluntary and community organisations who want to know more about good practice in ICT

management and about Open Source software. Herefordshire organisations can also access free help with cost effective and easy-to-maintain web and email solutions from Web Development Officer Jackie Carey. She specialises in web design, but can also provide training, advice and practical assistance as well as help with ICT planning and strategy.

New to the ICT team, but certainly not new to Community First is Database Co-ordinator Cheryl Cooney, who continues to maintain the Community First database and to organise the distribution of Newsline. She also administers the Herefordshire Voluntary and Community Database Partnership's Findgroups website ([www.findgroups.org.uk](http://www.findgroups.org.uk)) which helps you find groups or services within Herefordshire. Contact Cheryl (see below) to promote your organisation on the site or to amend your details on Community First's database.

The rest of the ICT team are working on short contracts funded through the Government's Change Up programme. These are strictly targeted projects aimed at those organisations who comprise the Infrastructure Consortia. These infrastructure Organisations

all offer support to other voluntary and community groups who in turn directly deliver services – for instance, Community First is involved because it is an Infrastructure Organisation.

Chris Bargman is working primarily on the Herefordshire Voluntary and Community Database. His aim is to improve the database so it is more user-friendly for the project's partners, and to make Findgroups work even better for users. Meanwhile, Website Project Manager Chris Bell is working with Amanda Weaver to improve the web presence of the 15 Infrastructure Consortia members in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Chris will be creating web portals for each Consortium, with additional 'members only' areas that will help improve communication between consortia members.

The final member of the team, John Rummery, is again working with Infrastructure Consortium members, but only in Worcestershire. He is helping to improve members' ICT management and upgrading ICT systems, so he is starting by assessing their needs and developing strategies.

**Sian Basker (01432 262963), Jackie Carey (01432 262971) and Chris Bargman (01432 267820) are based in the Hereford office while the rest of the team work from Malvern. They can all be contacted via the main Malvern office number, 01684 573334.**



Sian Basker



Matt Ramsay



Amanda Weaver



Cheryl Cooney



Chris Bell



Jackie Carey



John Rummery

## From the Editor



**T**he February issue of Newsline always seems a little late to be wishing our readers a happy new year, but nevertheless we would like to offer you New Year greetings and wish you a positive and rewarding 2006. For Community First there have been a number of recent new beginnings. We have a whole new ICT team, who are featured on the front page of this issue. We also welcome Matt Lennard to the staff – Matt did some temporary work for us last year so his name might already be familiar to readers.

Looking ahead, this is the time of year when we prepare to send out membership renewal requests. If you or your organisation are not yet members of Community First, now is a good time to consider joining. We offer a range of discounts for members, together with fast-track information available through our Extranet. (For details contact Cheryl Cooney at the Malvern office.)

Working in the voluntary sector often means trying to comprehend and respond to new and baffling government initiatives and funding opportunities. Newsline tries hard to avoid the jargon that forms the everyday communication of people who are 'in the know', but it sometimes seems to be an unstoppable flow. If you find Newsline difficult to understand, or alternatively if you feel we do a good job in writing in accessible English, then please get in touch. You can also contact us if you have events or services you wish to publicise, but please be aware of deadlines. Copy date for Issue 63 will be 28th February.

**NINA OWEN, EDITOR**  
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email: [ninao@comfirst.org.uk](mailto:ninao@comfirst.org.uk)

# Local TV – Putting Communities in the Picture

**T**V just got more local! In an exciting new experiment, the BBC are trying out a new concept in television - and they're trying it out here in Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

"Local Television is all about the local community it serves," says Auntie on the BBC website. "The BBC is keen to establish relationships with individuals and organisations within the local community to showcase talent and create greater opportunity for discussion and debate". It's early days yet – the trial launched in November and runs until June 2006 – but if all goes well, Local TV could turn out to be a great way for voluntary and community groups to get their message across.

Local TV works at a much more local level than the regional TV Broadcasts produced by Midlands Today, and some stories will have a longer shelf life. Hereford and Worcester TV is based at the BBC Hereford and Worcester local radio station. Roving video journalists cover the two counties and create ten-minute bulletin of local news and stories. There are several bulletins every day, and they can be viewed either on the internet or via digital satellite TV. On digital satellite, you can watch a 10 minute bulletin every hour on a fixed schedule. On the net, you can see the latest bulletin whenever you want, or chose individual stories that matter to you. To view Local TV on the net or to find out how to view by satellite, go to [www.bbc.co.uk/herfordandworcester](http://www.bbc.co.uk/herfordandworcester) and click the Local TV link on the top right of the home page.

One local organisation that has already taken advantage of local television is the Borrowers Toy Library in Malvern. Will your be the next to appear on the small screen.

**Hereford and Worcester TV is not only asking for your stories – they're also interested in any videos you've made that might be of interest to people across the two counties. For more details check out the Hereford and Worcester 'Where I Live' website at [www.bbc.co.uk/herfordandworcester](http://www.bbc.co.uk/herfordandworcester) or phone 01905 748485.**



# A day in the life of a senior manager

**N**ot everyone at Community First has day-to-day contact with the organisations and individuals who make up the **Newsline** readership. Here Sue Fry talks about her job, and her enthusiasm for all that is achieved by local voluntary organisations.

Having lived and worked in Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire all my life, the three shire counties have special resonance for me. The love of this area, and the belief that as George Elliot once said, "It is never too late to be what you might have been" helps maintain my energy and enthusiasm for the work I do within Community First.



As a senior manager, I am often a little removed from the challenges and rewards of working directly with voluntary and community organisations, but I know I have a part to play in helping the sector to achieve its potential. As I drive from Worcester, I focus on the priorities for the day. Sometimes I feel as though I am never able to finish one job before I need to start the next, but the variety certainly adds spice and interest.

My first task when I get to the Malvern office is to switch on the computer to scan the emails. Emails are wonderful, but I am sure we all spend much more time on them than we used to with letters, faxes and telephone calls. Today there are messages about national projects funded by ChangeUp, funding opportunities, quality standards, and arrangements for Board meetings, as well as many others. I then have quick conversations with two members of our Business Support team who provide support, information and advice to voluntary and community organisations. It is good to hear how working in partnership with others is leading in one case to a potential project which will make a real difference in rural communities, and in the other to a project which will recognise and improve quality within both Local Development Agencies and our own organisation.

Next comes a finance meeting for an ICT project in Herefordshire. The work is very exciting and has led to further development and funding bids which will improve ICT in some of the local infrastructure agencies (those organisations that give support and back-up to others). The finance information is complex, and takes quite a bit of unpicking, as all funders want information in different forms!

At lunch time, I race down to the Borrowers Toy Library, where I volunteer as Chair of the committee. It's something I enjoy doing and it gives me a bit of direct involvement in a small voluntary organisation delivering services directly to families and childcare providers.

Then it's back to the office to get my head down to a hefty piece of work – the Strategic Plan. The final draft is due to be considered by our Board at the end of March, and there is still a good deal to do. So many people need to be involved – the Board, staff, and our stakeholders. So much needs to be thought about – the environment in which we work (nationally, regionally and locally), our constraints and our opportunities. My job is to gather material to go in the plan, and work with Richard Quallington our Chief Executive to engage the organisation in developing it. I need to concentrate, so I hope there won't be too many interruptions!

Another day done, it is time to fight my way through the ever-increasing traffic back home. The day has brought its usual range of challenges and opportunities, and there is plenty left to do tomorrow – but there will always be work for those of us who believe that things can improve, so that they become what they might have been.

## Plan Ahead – Drama for your Village Hall

**T**he Fabulous Old Spot Theatre Company, named after the famous Gloucester pig breed, describes itself as one of Gloucestershire's newest and most exciting theatre companies. Rejecting the bright lights of theatres and cities, they would much rather tour village halls, bringing high quality all round entertainment to the community.

Founded in 2004, this professional group does an annual extensive autumn tour of village halls and community centres, and would be pleased to include Herefordshire and Worcestershire halls in its itinerary. Basing their style on Shakespearian travelling players, the company offers the kind of show enjoyable by all ages from five to 105, with drama, music, singing and occasionally dance.

Having successfully completed two autumn tours, they are now looking for venues that might wish to book them for the autumn and winter of 2006. All manner of parish notices, raffles and other local business will be welcome in the interval! The company travel with their own staging and village hall sized lighting rig, and can fit into most venues.

**For more details or to make a booking contact Olly Crick, artistic director on 01452 740573, mobile 0781 290 9584 or email [oldspottheatre@aol.com](mailto:oldspottheatre@aol.com). Information is also available on website [www.oldspottheatre.org.uk](http://www.oldspottheatre.org.uk)**





## Meet Matt



**M**att Lennard has recently joined the staff at Community First, working as Assistant Development Officer within the Business Support Team.

One part of Matt's role is to support the Community Resource Centres network. CRCs have been under Community First's umbrella for many years, offering community reprographics and access to computers for local groups across the two counties. Matt will be combining his CRC work with more general business advice and with promoting the work of the team.

Alison Chambers, Development Manager, said: 'We are delighted to welcome Matt to Community First. Matt will be contributing his knowledge of Business Studies and Media & Communications to the range of expertise that we have within the Business Support team. One of the key areas of work for Matt will be to ensure that our services are marketed to all those who may benefit, targeting those who are in greatest need.'

**Matt can be contacted on 01684 580860 or direct on 01684 580707, email: matthewl@comfirst.org.uk**

## Where can you find..?

### **Everyone Loves a Volunteer Accountant**

**T**he Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales offers accountancy help from its Everybody Counts team to voluntary organisations, including answers to their most frequently asked question of "How do I find a volunteer Chartered Accountant?"

The ICAEW website offers pages designed to help you identify a suitable volunteer from its membership of 127,000 Chartered Accountants. You are invited to advertise your needs on their website, after which the information will be published on the site for members to search in the self matching service. Alternatively you could try searching their online database yourself to see if a chartered accountant is out there who meets your needs.

*The Everybody Counts home page can be found on website [www.icaew.co.uk/everybodycounts/index.cfm](http://www.icaew.co.uk/everybodycounts/index.cfm)*

### **Need Services for Older People?**

**A**ge Concern Ledbury & District has produced an A-Z Directory for 2006, which will be a very useful source of information for anyone wanting to find organisations or individuals who offer services for older people in this area.

3,000 copies of the 33 page booklet have been produced in a handy A5 format with cover imaginatively designed by Simon Cooke of 'the Cartoonery' of Ledbury. Funded by The Rotary Club of Ledbury, it is available free of charge in locations around the town and from the Age Concern office in Bye Street.

*For more information contact Dennis Perkins, Chief Officer of Age Concern on 631280.*

### **Which Charity?**

**I**n December a new website, [www.guidestar.org.uk](http://www.guidestar.org.uk), was launched listing all UK charities. Its aims are to:

- improve the ability of small charities to raise funds;
- allow donors to make more informed choices;
- enable volunteer support to be channelled to the most effective organisations; and
- help beneficiaries to locate a charity which best serves their need.



The Times, Body and Soul, described it as "A bit like Google, albeit a worthier version...it's a godsend for anyone who wishes to make an informed charity choice and makes the experience more rewarding for all parties."

**GuideStar UK can be contacted on 020 7240 1969, email: [mailing@guidestar.org.uk](mailto:mailing@guidestar.org.uk). Better still, go to their website and see what's on offer.**

## What's a Parish Plan?

**H**ave you ever wanted to have a look at other people's parish plans? The new Commission for Rural Communities has a database that lists hundreds of plans completed by communities throughout the country. Many of these can be downloaded, offering local Parish Plan Groups and interested individuals a wealth of up to date information about community planning.

*To find out more go to [www.defra.gov.uk/rural/communities](http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/communities)*

# We are the Champions!

Jo Wells describes the opportunities on offer through Herefordshire Rural Learning Champions

**I**n October I surprised my friends and family by announcing that I am now a Champion. (Unfortunately this applies during working hours only – the rest of the time I still seem to be as ordinary as ever.) I am one of four Learning Champions now working in Herefordshire as part of a new project run by Herefordshire Library Service, jointly with Herefordshire Learning Partnership. Our role is to promote learning opportunities for adults in the market towns, villages and rural communities, as well as the part that the library service can play in helping people learn. We are part of the nationwide AimHigher project.



Throughout Herefordshire there are many classes, workshops, taster days, and accredited courses, as well as distance and on-line learning and one-to-one tutoring. It can be difficult and confusing for people outside the world of education to find out what opportunities there are, decode the jargon, and decide what best meets their needs. The Rural Learning Champions can work with you to find the right course (at any level), and can help with applications, or with introductions to tutors. For tutors, we can help make sure as many people as possible know about their course or group.

The Learning Champions are also organising some short taster courses, events and study skills workshops. So far we have held three computing taster sessions in local libraries, and have visited the Open University in Birmingham and Hereford College of Art and Design. A joint project with the Art College will help engage disaffected young people with creative activity, combining fun and education. Other short courses in the pipeline include Design for Life, an aspiration-raising workshop, and Paediatric First Aid. We will also be working with the local Lifelong Learning Development Groups to improve communication between interested groups and individuals.

**Please encourage people to contact us, whether it's for information over the phone or to meet for coffee and a talk. We are:**

**Jo Wells, Bromyard and Ledbury ..... 01531 636525**  
**Bob Short, Teme Valley..... 01568 770422**  
**Shirley Hill, Leominster and Weobley..... 01544 318956**  
**Jeremy Beavan, Ross ..... 01432 383280**  
**Jeremy Beavan, Golden Valley ..... 01981 512789**

# Publish and be Damned Independent

**O**ne of the most intriguing web phenomena of 2005 was the rise of Publishing on Demand: web enterprises that will print any number, however small, of any book submitted to them. The best-known of these is Lulu.com, which was launched here in the UK in August 2005. Under this revolutionary system, when authors are happy with their text it is 'published' on Lulu, where buyers can either download it as a PDF file (or 'e-book'), or order it as a conventional book.



Lulu's printing plant is filled with the latest in Xerox copiers: page paper and cover paper go in at one end, the machine does the sizing, cutting and glueing, and out pops a book at the other end. And Lulu does not stop at publishing books – videos, audio, calendars and other image collections are also available from the site. The fact that one item can be produced at a time eliminates the need for a minimum run to make a profit, and there is no danger of huge piles of remaindered copies being left unsold.

This makes Lulu.com the natural marketplace for works aimed at niche audiences. Where else on earth could you buy a canine cookbook, a book of tips for college students with ADD, a 35-minute video of a Tibetan Wedding or a calendar of photographs taken by at-risk children on summer camp?

Perhaps the most interesting aspect for voluntary and community groups and their fundraisers is that publishing on Lulu is free of set-up fees. Lulu prints and ships each product as it is bought, and the purchaser pays for it. The production costs are quite reasonable: for instance, a full colour 100-page perfect-bound book would cost around £11 to produce. The author adds whatever royalty they wish on top, and Lulu adds a commission of 25% of the royalty (not of the full price of the book). So say you added a £4 royalty to the £11 production cost. Lulu would add £1 commission to that, so the final price of your book would be £15. Lulu will track sales and royalties and reimburse you, and you (or your organisation) receive 80 percent of the profit on the book.

**To find out more about Lulu go to [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com).**

# Outcomes Noted from the OCN Certificate

**C**ommunity First has now been running the OCN Certificate for Practitioners in Basic Skills Support for three years. Completing the course and the assignments is an achievement in itself, but there are also a number of extra benefits. Comments from past learners include:

- I was a volunteer and it gave me the confidence to get paid work.
- I feel more confident in doing my job.
- It helped me get a job running Skills for Life sessions.
- I was able to get back into learning myself.
- I got a level two literacy qualification as well.
- I feel more able to identify the best way to help others.

40 organisations across both counties have used this free development opportunity for staff, volunteers and trustees. You can also have support for organisational development in this area. Is your organisation missing out?

**For more information contact Jan Brant on 01684 580866, email: [janb@comfirst.org.uk](mailto:janb@comfirst.org.uk)**



# Money for Disadvantaged Children or Young People in Worcestershire

**F**eatured on this page are the latest beneficiaries of the Local Network Fund. They all applied for funding for specific projects that aim to benefit children or young people in Worcestershire, but there the similarity ends. The projects themselves are widely different – maybe one of them could be the inspiration for a group near you to make an application to the Local Network Fund.



## local network fund for children and young people

To find out more about how your children's or young people's group might benefit from a grant, contact us on 01684 573337 or [www.communityfirst.org.uk](http://www.communityfirst.org.uk)

### 1ST MALVERN BOYS' BRIGADE:

A grant of £631 to take the Drum and Bugle Band to London to play at the Lord Mayor's Show and at the Cenotaph for the National Service of Remembrance (see below for their report of this event).

### REDDITCH NIGHTSTOP

Nightstop provides emergency accommodation to young homeless people. Their grant of £6,200 will enable them to set up a 'Time 4 me' group for young mothers.

### COLLAR AND TIE

A grant of £6,850 will enable Collar and Tie to run workshops for young children and their parents to encourage healthy eating. The events will be using an innovative and effective mix of theatre, ICT and role play and will be aimed at the most deprived areas of Worcester.

### KIDZFIRST TEME VALLEY

This provider of activities for 8 – 13 year olds with special needs sought to extend their services to the 13 – 19 age group. They work in an area of rural isolation, and their grant of £6,873 will pay staff and volunteer costs and will also cover expenditure on equipment and activities.

### KEMPSEY ROCKING HORSE PRE-SCHOOL

The project here is to develop an outdoor play area next to the pre-school. The grant of £2,927.45 will pay for boundary fencing and equipment for children with special needs.

### NORTH EAST WORCESTERSHIRE PRESCHOOL LEARNING ALLIANCE

The Alliance aims to provide a programme of healthy living courses for pre-school children and their parents. The £7,000 funding will pay for a qualified coach to run 18 courses across the Redditch and Bromsgrove area.

# Remember This!

**R**emembrance weekend 2005 was certainly a weekend to remember for members of the 1st Malvern Boys Brigade's drum and bugle band who had been invited to take part in the Lord Mayor's Show in London, and also the Royal British Legion's Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph. Reporting on the weekend, Paul Hern wrote:

For the Lord Mayor's Show we had to be inside the security cordon in central London by 8.15am. At 9.15am the whole band consisting of 115 buglers, drummers and bells-players marched from Chiswell Street to the band formation point at Smithfield Market. It was a bright, dry morning and not too cold. We were held in a rather grim underground car park for an hour or so along with the other massed bands, but at least we were provided with tea and a bun!

The London massed bugle band was item number 73 in the parade and we left the car park at 10.30am. We took our place in the main parade at 11.00 and the band played continuously for the length of the route, supported by relatives and friends of band members along the way. After a brief packed lunch supplied by the Mayor at the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand, the parade re-formed for its return, setting off from the Embankment. By 3.00pm we reached our base, having marched for almost 23,000 paces, or six miles.

The band received some of its best TV coverage in a number of years. Thousands watched us along the route, but there were also hundreds of thousands watching on television. The television commentator mentioned that the next Mayor of London was an ex-member of the Boys Brigade, and a keen interest was generated.

On the following day, boys from Malvern joined representatives from youth and civilian organisations from elsewhere to form the final column to parade past the Cenotaph. Then, at Horse Guards Parade, the salute was taken by Prince Charles.

For all the boys it was a truly memorable experience. As one of them (Nick) commented, "As a first-time participant in the Lord Mayor's Parade it was a fantastic experience and something I really enjoyed. The March Past at the Cenotaph was also a fantastic occasion to take part in (apart from the standing around!), remembering those who died for us and also representing the Boys Brigade nationally. The whole weekend was a wonderful experience."

***Funding to allow the boys from Malvern to take part in this weekend came from the Local Network Fund. To find out more about the Fund contact Louise Jones or Ali Rowlett on 01684 573337.***





# Big City – Big Celebration

The Calor Village of the Year competition is packed with opportunities to celebrate. Here Nina Owen writes about the big celebration that concluded the 2005 competition.

**F**or someone who is very definitely part of village life, London is not an ideal environment, especially in the month before Christmas when it is even more busy and full than usual. However, it was well worth making the journey to the big city to attend the Calor Village of the Year awards in early December and to help celebrate all that is good about community life in villages across England.

For a start, the venue itself was an experience – a posh hotel in central London, no more than a stone's throw from the Admiralty Arch. It was probably more used to welcoming distinguished individuals from the world of politics or commerce than several hundred country bumpkins.

The celebration began with a chance to meet and mingle with other guests, and I took the chance to talk to people from my native county of Norfolk as well as other County Organisers whom I had met at previous events. We sat down to lunch, and in a blaze of publicity we greeted Alan Titchmarsh who was there to present the various categories of awards. His professionalism and open friendliness set the tone for the occasion and we applauded winners from all over the country.

For me the big celebration came when our Herefordshire entrants, Cradley were called to receive not only the Defra prize for Building Community Life, but also the overall regional prize as Village of the Year. Judi Creed-Newton who had master-minded the entry was ecstatic, and local MP Peter Wiggin rushed to congratulate the Cradley team and join in the official photo. The rest of us applauded and Alan Titchmarsh received yet another kiss as he presented the impressive plaque.

So what do you gain from entering the Village of the Year competition, apart from a nice lunch in a posh hotel if you're a local winner? Previous entrants can vouch that there are plenty of good reasons to enter the competition. For a start, it provides a low-key opportunity to give your community a health-check and to see where there are gaps in local services. It can also be the spring-board for other activities – providing facilities, starting new groups or simply making the most of the ones that are there already. It can be the starter for working on a Parish Plan or for major fundraising for your village hall. Above all, it is an opportunity to celebrate the life of your village and to have fun!

The 2006 competition is now open, and any village of under 5,000 residents is eligible to enter. Last year's winners are not allowed to take part, so the 2006 winner could be you! We run separate competitions in Herefordshire and Worcestershire with the county winners becoming our representatives at regional level. So why not check out the tips (opposite) for making a successful entry and see the publicity sheet enclosed with this issue of Newslines. Then fill in the forms and have a go!

**For more information about the local Calor Village of the Year competitions contact Nina Owen on 01684 573334, or to request entry forms speak to Andrea Cooper on the same number (email [andreac@comfirst.org.uk](mailto:andreac@comfirst.org.uk)). Entry forms can also be downloaded from the Community First website – go to [www.communityfirst.co.uk](http://www.communityfirst.co.uk) and click on Projects. Then follow the link to Village of the Year. Details of the national competition can be found at [www.villageoftheyear.org/englishcalor.asp](http://www.villageoftheyear.org/englishcalor.asp) although at the time of writing these had not yet been updated for the 2006 competition.**

**Alan Titchmarsh said:**

*“Rural communities are an essential part of the fabric of our country - they are the backbone of British life. It is for this reason that the Calor Village of the Year competition, which aims to support and promote village life, is such a positive event and something which I am happy to support. The competition highlights the very best of village life, encouraging villagers to work together to the benefit of all residents. More importantly, it provides a forum for communities to share best practice and encourages them to address any problems or opportunities that become apparent following their involvement in the competition.”*







## 10 Tips for Local Entrants

- Obtain your entry forms as soon as possible and read them carefully. Be aware that it is a competition about village life, not village looks.
- Fill in something for every question – the county competition entrants are initially scored and shortlisted on the basis of their entry form alone.
- If your village has no school or environmental group, think about how you compensate for this – do you join with another village, do you have a positive system of encouraging individual activity or do you take no action?
- Make sure you are aware of all the groups and activities in your village. Invite them to get involved.
- If you have entered the competition before, make sure you highlight new activities that have taken place since your last entry.
- If you are shortlisted for a judges' visit think carefully about how you want to use the time to support all the categories of your entry.
- Be convinced about why your village is a potential winner.
- Talk to previous local entrants and especially winners.
- Check out the Calor Village of the Year national website or speak to Nina Owen at Community First.
- Above all, enjoy taking part. It's fun!

# A Job Well Done

Supported by:



Leading learning and skills

**If you work in the voluntary sector and would like a vocational qualification directly related to the job you do, now is the time to find out if you would be eligible for a free training place.**

Training opportunities on offer include

- a mandatory level 2 or 3 NVQ
- access to associated skills for life qualifications where appropriate
- access to technical certificates (for NVQ level 3 learners only), where appropriate

Topics include Management, Team Leading, Advice and Guidance, Business Administration, Health and Social Care, Learning and Development, ICT, Child Care and Customer Service. In addition, Optional Technical Certificates can be undertaken to complement level 3 NVQs. These are aimed at people who enjoy taught sessions, reading, studying and writing and are particularly suited to those who are new to management and want to build up their knowledge.

What are the benefits of this training opportunity? There are advantages both for you and for the organisation you work for. You can:

- Gain a nationally recognised qualification for the job you actually do
- Have a chance to review your work against national standards and develop your skills
- Enhance your career opportunities
- Pave the way to higher level qualifications
- Gain the reassurance and confidence that you are providing a quality service to nationally recognised standards; benefiting your organisation and service users, stakeholders, funders and yourself

**Eligible voluntary organisations with less than 249 employees, who register for this programme may benefit from an organisational training needs analysis. Each eligible learner in the organisation will also have an individual training needs analysis. For more details or to confirm eligibility contact Pauline Dumville on 01684 580860, email: paulined@comfirst.org.uk**

## Qualification Example NVQ2 in Team Leading

This is a fundamental qualification if you are working with others to achieve results, whether as a team leader or as part of a team where you have a degree of autonomy and responsibility. We aim to enable you to complete the qualification in six months from enrolment, but you can take up to a year.

### What it covers:

Four mandatory units –

- Manage your own resources
- Provide leadership to your team
- Develop productive working relationships with colleagues
- Ensure your own actions reduce risks to health and safety

### And a choice of two additional units to match your work from:

- Allocate and check the work in your team
- Encourage innovation in your team
- Provide learning opportunities to colleagues
- Resolve customer service problems
- Support customer service improvements



The training will be delivered through monthly group learning sessions and tutorials. Assessment will be through observation of your work and a portfolio of evidence

## Too Much Cash at Awards for All

**A**wards for All has £2.6 million left to spend before the end of this financial year. They are keen to receive as many quality applications as possible during the next couple of months. Many groups have decided to wait until the ceiling for applications is raised to £10,000, so if your project is a small one this could be a very good way of obtaining up to £5,000 of funding.

Awards for All is a good way to fund feasibility studies, small practical projects, and work around parish plans. The opportunities are endless and the application process is simple.

*More information is available at [www.awardsforall.org.uk](http://www.awardsforall.org.uk); follow the links to the West Midlands part of the website.*

## Comic Relief –UK programme

**O**ver the next four years Comic Relief is planning to change the way it works and to focus their money on making an even greater difference to the lives of people who really need support. In the meantime, the Red Nose Day programmes of 2005-08 are their biggest grants fund. During this time they are concentrating their funding on six programme areas: Young people; Older People; Mental Health; Refugees & Asylum Seekers; Domestic Violence; Disadvantaged Communities.

Comic Relief usually make some large grants, and a range of smaller grants of between £15,000 and £30,000 each year. They also have a fast-track application process for small grants up to £5,000. Grants are usually for between one and three years.

For the main grants programme the next deadlines are 5th May and 8th September, with decisions made within five months of each application deadline. Deadlines for funding cycles in 2007-2008 will be announced towards the end of this year. For small grants applications can be made at any time.

*Contact Comic Relief UK on 020 7820 5555, email: [red@comicrelief.org.uk](mailto:red@comicrelief.org.uk) or see website: [www.comicrelief.com](http://www.comicrelief.com)*

# FUNDING FOCUS



## BBC Children in Need

**B**BC Children in Need welcomes applications for good quality, carefully planned projects which show a clear focus on children in order to change their lives for the better. It is not essential to be a registered charity, but applicants should be properly constituted, non-profit organisations working with children aged 18 years and under, who live in the United Kingdom. Grants must aim to benefit children who

- are disadvantaged by any kind of disability
- have behavioural or psychological problems
- live in poverty or situations of deprivation or
- are suffering from illness, distress, abuse or neglect.

*The next closing date is 30th March. To obtain an application form and guidelines, or for advice contact the Midlands office for BBC Children in Need on 0121 5676707, email: [pudsey@bbc.co.uk](mailto:pudsey@bbc.co.uk)*

## Lack of Initiative?

**T**he Countryside Agency has announced that the Local Heritage Initiative will cease to operate from the end of September this year (when the Countryside Agency itself ceases to exist). The last date for the receipt by the Countryside Agency of formal applications will be 30th June. Projects which are 'live' at the end of September will be transferred to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

*For more information on the fund, see the Local Heritage Initiative website at [www.lhi.org.uk](http://www.lhi.org.uk)*

## Every Little Helps!

**T**he Tesco Charity Trust Community Award Scheme gives grants totalling £400,000 to local projects in communities where there are Tesco stores. Awards are one-off donations of between £1,500 and £5,000 which aim to benefit local organisations whose core work supports children's education and welfare, children and adults with disabilities, and elderly people.

Applications are considered in two rounds, with the deadline for applications to support elderly people and people with disabilities being 30th June. (The deadline for applications to benefit children has passed.)

The first step in applying for funding is to write to the Tesco Charity Trust with brief details of your project. This will ensure that your request is recorded on the current year's database and included in the distribution of application forms. However, it is important to read the Trust's guidelines to ensure that your project is eligible.

*Write to the Tesco Charity Trust at Tesco House, Delamare Road, Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, EN8 9SL. The guidelines can be found at website [www.tescocorporate.com/images/Charity\\_trust\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.tescocorporate.com/images/Charity_trust_guidelines.pdf)*

# Ringers Silenced at St Laurence

**A**t the start of 2005 the bell ringers at St Laurence Church in Alvechurch were very short of members with only five ringers for the impressive eight bells. But local enthusiasm led to a recruitment and training campaign and the year ended with eight ringers performing regularly on Sundays and five more from Alvechurch Middle School under training. All was going well until bad news arrived.

The bad news was that they need to spend £60,000 on essential restoration work to the bells and tower. The beams supporting the bells must be strengthened and the bells themselves will have to be removed from the tower to be refurbished. The photograph below shows the effect of 295 years erosion where the clapper strikes the tenor bell.



This will be the first time that the bells have been out of the tower since 1711 and the largest project since bells one and two were added in 1891. The ringers are launching an appeal in 2006 to raise the funds. Some local firms have already offered practical help and the ringers would be glad to hear from anyone else who could assist.

**There is more information about the bells and about this exciting project on their web site at [www.alvechurchdata.co.uk/bells](http://www.alvechurchdata.co.uk/bells).**

## Start 2006 with a Freebie

**Free advice is available to voluntary and community groups – on any subject!**

**I**f you have an issue, concern or an idea that you want to sound out, then our free advice service may be just what you're looking for. We have specialist staff who have so far provided support on business and strategic planning (with an outcomes focus if required), project management, evaluating risk, employment issues, constitutions, funding, looking after buildings, developing a play space, finance, governance, monitoring and evaluation and quality systems.

It works like this: We meet with you on a one to one basis to carry out a needs analysis. Then, to make the most of the meeting, we write a report with a number of useful recommendations aimed specifically at your organisation. We can offer up to two full days, which will also include a quick training needs analysis to spot any development needs you may have.

Positive feedback has been coming in from organisations that have already taken advantage of the service, such as one of our clients who said "You were absolutely right – I went back to look at the report and we'd done everything you'd recommended! Thank you!"

**To make use of this service call 01684 580860 and ask for Ruth Hunt. She will then explain the support that we can offer you.**

**Don't miss...** See our insert with this issue of Newslines for a range of courses including start-up training for Social Enterprises. These will be starting in February in Worcestershire. If you do not have the insert, contact Ruth Hunt on 01684 580860.

## From Rhetoric to Reality

West Midlands

**RURAL  
COMMUNITY**  
COUNCIL NETWORK

**W**est Midlands Rural Community Council Network acknowledges that there is a real challenge in meeting DEFRA's new rural strategy that aims for 'Social Justice for All'. Regional bodies across the whole of the country have been tasked with developing a regional development framework for delivering and supporting rural services at a local level, and so with this in mind the West Midlands RCC Network is planning a conference entitled 'Social Justice for All: from rhetoric to reality'.

Taking place on Monday 13th March at the University of Worcester Conference Centre, the conference will address national drivers and aspirations, regional champions and challenges and local action and response. In short, it aims to take a journey from rhetoric to reality!

At the time of writing it is hoped that speakers will include Nick Read, Chair of the West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum, Jim Knight MP, DEFRA Parliamentary Under Secretary (Commons) and representatives from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Commission for Rural Communities.

Aimed primarily at infrastructure agencies (organisations that support others), local authorities and regional partners, the conference might also appeal to some larger voluntary or community organisations who want to help shape the rural strategic agenda.

**For details or to book your place contact Michelle O'Neill on 01684 573337 or email [michelleo@comfirst.org.uk](mailto:michelleo@comfirst.org.uk)**



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## And Finally...



Richard Quallington

**So what, I wonder, will 2006 bring to the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire?** More change... inevitably; new government initiatives... certainly; real improvements to the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged people... hopefully!

'Building better Communities' remains Community First's mission in 2006. Healthy local voluntary and community groups provide the life blood of a vibrant, inclusive society, and the government certainly recognises this. But it needs to remember that its tendency for control could stifle the very innovation and energy it seeks to harness. This year the sector needs more support, and less control, to do what it does best:- empowering the disadvantaged, challenging injustice and developing solutions that make a real difference to people's lives.

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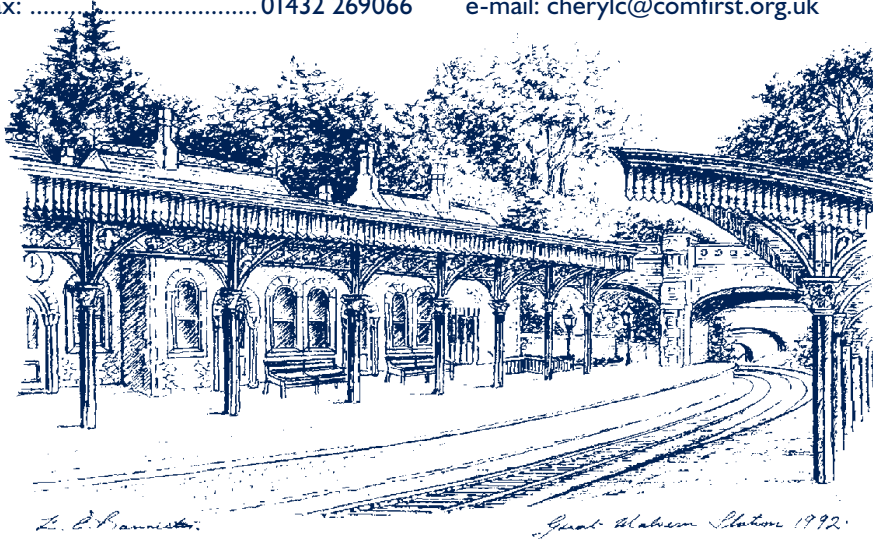
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