Marsh Farm Centre visited The Marston Forest Centre for the first time recently. The weather was good and families and staff walked around the centre, with some completing the five mile walk… enjoying the wonderful view!

The walk was too much for the younger children so their families stayed and enjoyed the adventure of the playground and surrounding area. Centre staff provided families with treasure maps so the more adventurous families went hunting for treasure…and picnics were enjoyed!

This trip is just the beginning of the summer term, look out for more outings and join us for a summer full of adventure!
“I came here from Sri Lanka about five years ago and at first I was a bit lonely – I’d worked as a lawyer in the Supreme Court in Colombo and I’d had a very active professional life so motherhood was very different. I’d taken on a great deal and had a lot of changes to cope with, so it was great to discover somewhere that I could go with Yusuf. The Children's Centre plays a very important role in the community here and I’m really pleased to be involved – both as a mother and a volunteer.”

**SHAHRA HAS BEEN ON A WIDE RANGE OF COURSES THAT INCLUDE AQUA-NATAL AND CHILD BEHAVIOUR.**

“When I was pregnant with Zayd, I went along to the aqua-natal classes and the baby massage sessions with Yusuf. One of the best courses was the one on difficult child behaviour. It was incredibly helpful as we were able to look at a lot issues that concerned us all. I also made friends with some of the other mothers there – we really shared a bond and would often exchange useful childcare tips. My husband came along to some of the sessions too and I think we all found it useful getting a father’s perspective.”

**SHAHRA HAS JOINED TWO VOLUNTEER GROUPS AT THE CENTRE.**

“I go along to the Parents’ Voices group every fortnight – a small group of us got together because we wanted to have an input into the organised activities and help out. We mainly look at how best our needs, as parents, can be accommodated at the Centre. One concern that I had, for instance, was that it can be hard to join a group such as the Baby Club if you are a first-time mum or quite shy. We talked it over within the group and we now encourage mums to interact more to help those coming along for the first time, we’ve also suggested that there be more structure to the group. As a result, new changes are to be introduced which I think will help some of the mums bond more with each other. I also recently joined the parents’ group for my son’s nursery. Here, we look at how the children are actually being taught and how we can help with the fundraising activities.”

**STAFF AT THE CENTRE, SAYS SHAHRA, ARE VERY PERCEPTIVE ABOUT A MOTHER’S NEEDS.**

“I drop into the Centre every day – Yusuf is in the nursery – and I obviously come in for the parents’ group meetings. I find it so welcoming and I know that I wouldn’t come if it wasn’t like that. Everyone is very approachable and friendly; even if, as mothers, we don’t raise a particular issue they seem to have a knack of knowing if you are a bit down. I went through a difficult stage adjusting to living in a new country and accepting the changes of being a full-time stay at home mum. I remember dropping the little ones off and one member of staff came up to me and asked if I wanted a chat. It was just what I needed and it helped me sort things out in my head.”

**IF THEY CAN’T HELP OUT, SAYS SHAHRA, THEY KNOW SOMEONE WHO CAN...**

“One of the most important services offered by the Centre is that, on the rare occasion when they are unable to help, they put you in touch with people who can. When I wanted to set up my own business painting murals for children’s bedrooms and nurseries, the staff really encouraged and inspired me and put me in touch with the right people. Today, thanks to the staff here, I can still enjoy being with my kids but I’ve also been able to turn my hobby into a career too.”
GROUPS FOR YOU!

Garden Training: planting for the future

We have been busy planting raspberries, onions, sweetcorn… and our runner beans are now ready to be planted out. Our Gardening Training has proved to be a great success for people of all age groups. The tutor has provided the class with practical experience as well as information about how to grow plants from seeds using flower pots or grow bags.

We are hoping to have a number of raised flower beds which will make it easier for children to enjoy gardening. Would you like to help us look after the plants? It's good fun for all ages! To get involved call the Marsh Farm Children’s Centre on 01582 556661.

Aqua Fitness

One of the successful groups we have running is Aqua Fitness. Aqua Fitness is suitable for all, including pregnant and non-pregnant mums… and non-swimmers! It's a friendly environment and a great way to get fit and meet new people. Sharon Cafferty (Midwife) runs the group is always on hand to answer any questions or worries you may have.

To get involved call the Marsh Farm Children’s Centre on 01582 556661.

Forthcoming events and summer outings

This summer we are organising the following trips:

- Southend-on-sea on Saturday 26th July
- Willen Lake on Wednesday 6th August
- Clacton-on-sea on Saturday 16th August
- Linton Zoo on Wednesday 20th August.

To get involved call the Marsh Farm Children’s Centre on 01582 556661.

Leabank Playscheme

The playscheme will be running as usual starting on the 4th August until the end of August. For more information on the playscheme and the trips contact the Children Centre on 01582 556661.

Well done to all our achiever parents!

This year we organised many courses in which parents/cares participated and enrolled on. To celebrate the achievement of the candidates we are holding an achievers lunch on Tuesday 15th July. We will be organising more courses after the summer term so to be part of the celebration next year contact the Children Centre.

INFORMATION SHARING

Marsh Farm Sure Start Children's Centre has an information sharing policy. Information you give to Children's Centre staff will not be shared with agencies outside the Centre without your express permission. We will only share information without your permission in exceptional circumstance, for example to ensure the safety of an adult or child. Please ask any member of staff if you have any questions regarding this issue.
As a Midwife working at Marsh Farm Children’s Centre I feel it is important to be seen in the Community. I have worked for Sure Start for many years and still feel that I am not known as much as I would like.

My work involves extra support during pregnancy and for the family as a whole afterwards. I work closely with an excellent team of professionals who are dedicated to help those in our community. We are based at the Children’s Centre Redgrave Gardens and I was finding more often than not that I was getting in my car outside; driving to visits (often within a mile radius) then back to the centre. To get a better feel of the community and what goes on (and to get a bit fitter!) I decided to start doing my visits on pushbike.

It is amazing cycling through the alleys how quickly you can get from one side of Marsh Farm to the next. There is so much to see around here, it is so peaceful behind the high-rise flats; along the river you don’t even feel as if you’re in the hustle and bustle of Marsh Farm. I am seeing familiar faces and meeting new. I was even asked if I was the new post lady (think it’s the basket on the front!).

Please if you see me stop and have a chat or pop in to the Midwives drop in clinic held every Wednesday 9.30 to 11.30 at the Children’s Centre. Hope I’ll be meeting many more of you.

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