

# FOREST OF MERCIA NEWS

Issue 10

AUTUMN 2011

## Free First Steps courses for adults now available

The Forest of Mercia is pleased to be able to offer courses on greenwood crafts, environmental awareness, growing fruit and vegetables, forestry skills and independent living.

These First Steps courses are available for adults who want to get back into learning in Cannock District. The aim of this training is to get people back into learning through informal and friendly courses, with a view to progressing on to further learning when the course is complete.

The courses are available free of charge to the follow-

ing people; the unemployed, carers or the cared for, people who have a learning or other disability, those experiencing mental health challenges and those with low or no qualifications.

The project is funded by The Skills Funding Agency through Staffordshire's Adult and Community Learning Service.

All courses are 12 hours in length. The content, length, timing and location of the sessions can be flexible to meet the needs and interests of the learners in the group. Contact the team on 01543 370737 for more in-



formation or to book a place.



## Welcome to a new Team Member!

Jane Rodd started with the Forest of Mercia in August, job sharing with the existing Community Forest Manager Rebecca Banks. Jane has worked for a plethora of charities and organisations

and most recently for Adult and Community Learning for Staffordshire County Council. The two managers split the week, with Rebecca working the first half and Jane working the second.

Andy Goode, Chair of the Steering Group says,

"We are sure Jane's experience and background will make her a real asset to the team."

### Inside this issue:

	Page
SURVIVE! NEW SCHOOL PACKAGE	2
TWIGLETS	2
COMMUNITY PATHS INITIATIVE	2
TREE WARDENS UPDATE	3
WYRLEY AND ESSINGTON CANAL	3
STYCHBROOK - UP AND COMING WORK	3
COMING SOON - APPLE DAY	4



## Survive! Bushcraft and Greenwood Craft Skills offered to schools



Students from Jerome Primary School and Norton Canes Primary School attended a half day Survive! session at the end of September. The children from year six went back to school having made rope using willow bark and a round house shelter using birch. The Survive! package is being developed currently to offer out to schools in particular.

As well as linking in with many aspects of the National Curriculum, the team building and confidence boosting activities support with the transitional stages in a student's life. If your school would be interested in finding out more about Survive! please contact one of the Forest of Mercia team. A short promotional film is being produced on

Survive! and costs and details can be sent to you directly.

This package can be adapted to meet your needs and can be altered to suit different ages and group size.

**"It was interesting, because it was something different." Comments from a participating student in Survive!**

## Twiglets

Twiglets ran successfully over the summer holidays at Chasewater Innovation Centre. Now with continued funding from Children's Services, (Cannock District), Twiglets has moved back to Norton Canes Children's Centre. Running every Wednesday morning, children aged 2-5 and

their parents and carers are provided with environmental inspiration and activities.

Hilary Foxley, Development Manager at Chasewater Innovation Centre highlights the success of Twiglets,

"There is a real demand for the activities here, to the extent we

have to run a reserve list. It's brilliant to see families enjoying and learning about nature and the outdoors".



## Community Paths Initiative



Over the last few months we have received a number of queries relating to pathway improvements. We thought we would therefore provide some information on relevant funding available through Staffordshire County Council.

The County Council administers a small grants scheme that aims to

increase local awareness and enjoyment of local paths by involving local people in their care, improvement and promotion. Grants are in the region of £200 to £1,000. Preference is given to applications where there is voluntary contribution, local funding, sponsorship or national grant income included. Local groups and parish coun-

cils can apply to cover capital and revenue costs. Pathways have to be designated Rights of Way.

For more information contact one of the Forest of Mercia team or Paul Rochfort from Staffordshire County Council on 01785 277241 [paul.rochfort@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:paul.rochfort@staffordshire.gov.uk)

## Tree Wardens - update

Walsall Tree Wardens runs every other Thursday and is a jointly managed volunteer team, through the Forest of Mercia and Walsall Countryside Services. The Tree Wardens undertake proactive site work throughout Walsall, making a positive environmental difference to their local communities. Activities may include formative

pruning, path clearance or planting work where possible. Funding has just been secured by the Forest of Mercia to develop a Tree Warden scheme in Cannock District. This too will be a hands-on team, volunteering to undertake work on sites throughout Cannock. Training and supervision is provided. The Cannock Tree Warden

scheme is acting as a pilot to assess the potential for coordinating this programme of activity throughout the county. Something to watch out for in the future! If you are interested in joining the Walsall or Cannock Tree Warden schemes, please contact a member of the Forest of Mercia team in the first instance.



## Wyrley and Essington Canal

The Forestry team have been busy over the summer, working largely on access improvements and site maintenance. One example of this work is the towpath on Wyrley and Essington Canal which has been improved by the team. A volunteer day on the canal also saw a fishing peg being in-

stalled. The Forestry team will be shifting to woodland management and maintenance work over the winter months. An example of this work is highlighted below.

If you have an involvement with woodland, open spaces, or a parkland for example and would like the Forestry team to sup-

port with on-site work, please get in touch with one of the team. We may be able to integrate the work into an existing programme of activity we run. If not, we will be able to provide you with a competitive quote if the work comes within the remit of our team.

**“Keeping access clear is essential to encouraging people to positively use their local environment”**  
**Chris Martin,**  
**Assistant Forester**

## Stychbrook - up and coming work

The Forest of Mercia team will be working for Lichfield District Council to improve an area of woodland at Stychbrook. This will open up the inside of the woodland, improving access with a new path made from woodchip and the thinned poles cut from the wood. By thinning the wood, more daylight will be able to filter onto

the woodland floor and this will encourage a greater variety of plants to grow.

In the spring bluebells and wild daffodils will be planted to increase the variety in the woodland further.

Thinning the trees allows the ones left to grow faster and bigger and so provide a better habitat

for wildlife and improve the landscape for people.

The thinning work will be done by the Forest of Mercia Forestry team, and the path and other access work will be done with help from local volunteer groups. We hope to involve local school groups in the bulb planting in the spring.



## Your local Community Forest - Nurture, Value, Enjoy.

### AUTUMN 2011

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Forest of Mercia is a Partnership Organisation

We work in partnership with Staffordshire County Council, South Staffordshire District Council, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, Lichfield District Council, Cannock Chase Council, Forestry Commission and Natural England.

We also work with community groups, friends groups, schools, businesses and funding providers to achieve the positive work we carry out.

[www.forestofmercia.org.uk](http://www.forestofmercia.org.uk)

### Coming Soon - Apple Day Celebrations and more!



With the half term holiday upon us, please keep an eye on the Events and Activities page on the website. A special apple themed Twiglets session is being delivered on Wednesday 26th October in the morning to celebrate Apple Day (held on October 21st each year). This will be followed by an afternoon of apple tasting, peeling, displays and activities all at

Chasewater Innovation Centre.

The Forest of Mercia has partnered with Chasewater Innovation Centre and the BBC to provide Live 'n' Deadly Activities on weekends up until the end of November and throughout half term. Pop to Chasewater to get involved with a self-facilitated activity to solve the Deadly Scene Investigation! On completion children will receive a certificate, badge and a code to unlock special features on the Live 'n' Deadly website!

You can keep up to date with all of the Forest of Mer-

cia's activity through a variety of ways.

Become a Friend of the Forest, follow us on Twitter, check out the website, or give us a call!

