



Hands on learning that helps drive change

10 September 2012

HM LORD-LIEUTENANT OPENS NEW GASP MOTOR WORKSHOP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey, Dame Sarah Goad, made a return visit to the GASP Motor Project on Monday 10th September to open the charity's new Motor Workshop for young people. Over 100 guests watched her cut the ribbon on the purpose built Workshop at the Sand Pit, Albury, which has been constructed by the Northumberland Estate to the charity's specifications.

Also on display at the event was the new Mobile vehicle (an ex-Surrey Ambulance), which has been converted, re-branded and is now delivering GASP sessions to young people throughout Surrey.

GASP provides hands-on courses in basic motor mechanics and practical engineering skills for young people aged between 14 and 19 years. It was launched in 2005 as an evening activity for young people living in and around Gomshall, Albury, Shere and Peaslake (GASP). In 2009 it became a charity, introducing daytime sessions for young people across Surrey who are disaffected, disadvantaged and under achieving, and those with special educational needs. Through its work, it also supports the advancement of crime-resistant communities, diverting young people at risk of anti-social behaviour and providing alternatives to problematic alcohol and drug misuse.

Dame Sarah Goad commented: "The provision of alternative learning programmes for young people who, for whatever reason, find it hard to engage with mainstream education, has never been more vital. I have watched with interest the development of the GASP Motor Project over the past seven years and am delighted now to be opening this splendid new Workshop. It is also exciting to see the new mobile vehicle, which enables the charity to deliver its programmes to young people right across our county."

The opening of this new Workshop – almost twice the size of the previous GASP facility at Gomshall – together with the newly developed mobile service, means that the charity now plans to deliver over 150 daytime sessions in the next 12 months. This is a three-fold increase over 2011 and brings with it a huge opportunity for GASP to significantly expand the scale, reach and impact of its programmes.

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Evening sessions will continue to attract young people to the new Workshop who are keen to discover more about motor mechanics – some of them before learning to drive – and those working towards their Duke of Edinburgh Gold and Silver Awards.

Andy Finch, Chief Executive of GASP explained: “Our experienced team of engineers and skilled volunteers, led by Workshop Manager Barrie Birchmore, teach practical skills in a safe and supervised professional environment. GASP works with some of the hardest to reach young people in society. Using motor mechanics as a key motivator, we develop and deliver customised ‘accredited’ programmes of activity, which provide them with opportunities to re-engage with education and learning.”

This autumn, GASP will be partnering with the Brooklands Museum at Weybridge to run a 12-week programme for ‘at risk’ young people who will repair and restore vehicles used in the Brooklands’ ‘driving days’ programme thanks to funding from Toyota. Guests at the Workshop Opening will see another vehicle from the Museum, restored during a similar project.

Representatives from schools and other groups that commission GASP to deliver programmes will attend the event, together with partner organisations – notably Surrey County Council (principally the Surrey Youth Support Service) and Surrey Police – who have worked closely with the charity on its exciting expansion programme. Also present will be the current High Sheriff of Surrey, Mrs Karin Sehmer, and five High Sheriffs who have supported GASP as it has developed.

Chair of Trustees, Sally Varah commented: “We are especially grateful to – and welcome – those Trusts and individuals who continue to provide the funding without which the GASP Motor Project could not deliver this life changing alternative learning programme. Our aim is to help young people to change their behaviours; progress through education, employment and training; to prepare them in a practical way for the world of work and enable them to experience the value of teamwork. It is gratifying that the organisations that commission our programmes and sometimes the young people themselves tell us that we are succeeding in that goal.”

ENDS



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