

## Bexley Moorings Summer Camp 2011

During the summer of 2011 and by way of funding from the Rotary Club of Sidcup Educational Trust, The Bexley Moorings Project were able to take 14 vulnerable young people from the borough of Bexley to Thriftwood activity centre in Essex for four days of camping and activities.

The Moorings staff were accompanied by three volunteers who gave their time to help run the camp and engage and develop the young people, and of course have some fun.

The young people who attend the Bexley Moorings Project are referred from many different sources including local schools, Social Services, and other support groups.

The common issues as to why the young people are referred to Bexley Moorings are that they are experience one or more of the following:

- social isolation
- low confidence / self esteem
- behaviour difficulties
- special education needs

Having the opportunity to provide a summer camp for the third successive year proved very beneficial to both the young people and staff.

During the four days away the young people got a chance to kayak, build a raft in teams (which fell apart and everyone got very wet!), try their luck at archery, cook on an open fire and eat a delicious chilli prepared by one of the volunteers.

What the young people took away from this year's summer camp is hard to define but here are a few things .....

- new sustainable friendships
- improved confidence and self esteem
- longer time spent with positive role models
- learning new skills
- learning more about themselves
- having fun

The interaction with adults during camp who are not in their immediate family or from their community enabled the young people to listen to different points of view, take onboard advice and look to these adults as role models.

From a personal point of view it was fantastic to see the young people outside of their normal environment enjoying the outdoors and trying things they may never have had the opportunity to do before, and working together to benefit the camp as a whole and raising their confidence.

All the young people that attended were presented with a certificate listing all their achievements over the four days. These were:

- Erecting a tent
- Cooking on an open fire
- Working in a team
- Life skills
- Understanding nature
- Enjoying the outdoors
- Toleration and appreciation of other people's needs

The benefit that a summer camp provides for the staff of Bexley Moorings is working with the young people over a longer period which lends its self to intense exposure and truly helps build relationships. From this camp alone I have seen behaviour that I would not have witnessed at our Monday evening group due to the time in which the young people would be with us.

This year's camp proved to be a huge success and as a project we are very thankful to the Rotary Club of Sidcup for funding it. The funding enabled us to build on our experience of organising a camp last year to benefit another 14 young people this year.