

East Staffordshire Racial Equality Council Connecting Communities Festival 8th August 2010



BACKGROUND

In January 2010 East Staffordshire Racial Equality Council decided to hold another Connecting Communities Festival, drawing on the experience gained from hosting a similar event in 2005 at Tutbury Castle. The previous event had been made possible because at that time ESREC had a team of Connecting Communities Officers, plus the financial support from various statutory bodies. ESREC has been asked on many occasions for this to be an annual event, unfortunately this had not been possible. However, this year, ESREC staff felt the time was right to hold this event again and when the director broached the subject to key personnel at the Borough Council, he had a positive response.

The aim of the festival was to have a free day out for families with a variety of performances from different ethnicities showcasing their cultures celebrating our diverse community. All statutory, public and private organisations would be invited to have a stand at the festival where the community could learn more about services on offer.

STEERING GROUP

The steering group was formed in February 2010. It consisted of:

Amir Kabal OBE	ESREC
Anne Grantham	ESREC
Hopeton Gordon	ESREC
Charlotte Taylor	ESBC
Charlotte Bodger	ESBC
Jav Oomer	Staffordshire Police
Stephanie Bendall	YMCA
John Beaty	Burton College
Tosin Durojaiye	Trent and Dove Housing
Jason Gardiner	Staffs Fire & Rescue

It was confirmed the festival would be held on 8th August 2010 at Shobnall Leisure Complex; the site was made available by ESBC.

Meetings were held with ESBC and Staffordshire Fire & Rescue on the Shobnall site to discuss any potential risks.

John Beaty of Burton College offered the services of students to design and print the promotional leaflets and posters.

Inspector Jav Oomer confirmed that as this was a free entry event with no alcohol on the premises, then outside security was not necessary. Marshalls and helpers could be enlisted from students etc.

Arriva Travel agreed to supply a free park and ride service from the Town Hall car park to the venue



*Charlotte Bodger of
East Staffordshire Borough
Council*

*One of the Steering group
members*

PREPARATION

With the venue booked, ESREC then set about securing the funding and booking the equipment etc.

The Public Liability insurance was also arranged.

A letter was sent to Statutory and Public organisations inviting them to take part.

Angela Bailey, of ESREC's INTERMIX project contacted many local private stall holders also inviting them to take part.

Face painting, mask making, balloon twisting, and juggling artists and a magician were also booked.

The aim was to get performers from as many different ethnicities as possible, to demonstrate their own cultural style of music, dance and entertainment.

Of course the obligatory bouncy castle and pony rides were also booked.

Advertising banners were designed and purchased and Burton College designed and printed the posters and leaflets which were distributed all over Burton.

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service spokesman said "We are always keen to take part in these events to ensure safety remains at the forefront of all our activities. The organisers have taken on board all our suggestions and minimised the risks".

Amir Kabal OBE, Director of ESREC welcomed the Mayor and Honorary President of ESREC, Cllr. David Leese.

FESTIVAL DAY



Some of the 'helpers' at the festival

He also welcomed Cllr. Philip Atkins, Leader of Staffordshire County Council. He outlined the aim and objective of the festival. Amir Kabal said "We have seen so many changes in our local demographic, we are providing this opportunity to celebrate the rich diversity and cultures of our local communities and at the same time making it easy for service providers to share information and get the community safety, health, education and environmental message across to the general public". He then invited Cllr. David Leese to open the festival.

The Mayor said "It is wonderful to see a diverse list of participants, it reflects the changes we have seen around us, this is an excellent opportunity to celebrate local diversity and the Borough Council is happy to support the festival"

Cllr. Philip Atkins, the Leader of Staffordshire County Council then took the opportunity to speak and said “Diversity of cultures is most impressive, the County Council takes the view that fairness and respect is at the heart of everything we do, we direct resources to the greatest needs at all times”.



The festival got off to a rousing start with the Indian Dhol Drummers. These very talented young men from Derby set the tone for the rest of the day with their exciting drum playing

Our Master of Ceremonies for the day was Hopeton Gordon. Hopeton (Gman) is a Parent Support worker with ESREC’s Intermix Project. He really comes into his own when taking centre stage at this type of event. He kept the audience entertained between acts and he was certainly very popular.

Photo courtesy of Burton Mail



GMan with Angela Bailey his co-worker. Angela is the Education Development Officer with Intermix

The next act on stage was “ACE”, giving a kick boxing demonstration. Before their display started the public was introduced to Hassan Ali – Lion Heart. Hassan is the European kick boxing champion who hails from Burton upon Trent. He started his career with ACE and progressed from there to become the champion he is. Like all sports there is a real skill to kick boxing and the display by ACE showed that despite their young age the skill was already there.

With Hassan Ali winning the European Championship and being a good ambassador for kick boxing, it is understandable that this sport is becoming even more popular locally.



*Photo courtesy of Burton Mail
Ace kick boxing team in action. Young, talented, enthusiastic and motivated*

The Shobnall Parish Council Chair, Cllr. Bill Ganley and Vice Chair Carole Beresford, along with other members were in attendance. Bill Ganley said “It is a good opportunity to meet with people and other organisations and share progress and success of parish council work”



Touch of Life Dance Crew entertaining the crowd under the inspirational leadership of Dean Carruthers one of ESREC's Executive Committee members. The group is made up of local young people from diverse ethnic backgrounds.



Errol Cole got the audience singing and the crowd enjoyed his performance. Errol is a local musician who has turned professional. He has a brilliant voice and the ability to really entertain a crowd

Burton College representatives were kept very busy. They said "We have been able to provide information to lots of people about learning and educational opportunities starting in September 2010".

The Sikh sword dancing display was very popular. The crowd was mesmerised by the sheer skill, agility, accuracy and timing of movements. The crowd enjoyed this display and showed their pleasure with clapping and warm words of appreciation.



Sabir Mahmood used the violin to play traditional Kurdish and Oriental music whilst the groups entertained the crowd with Kurdish dancing, inviting members of the audience to participate. Sabir was a regular children's entertainer on a Kurdish TV channel in Iraq.



Young members of Ace Kick Boxing Club

A representative of Trent and Dove said "One senior citizen visited our stall; we gave information about our home alert scheme. The lady was very pleased and said she did not know this was available, a very good way to engage with the public."



During the lunchtime break the visitors took the opportunity to visit all the stalls and learn about the many services available whilst sampling the different foods and stopping for refreshment at the Interfaith Cafe

Sir James Hawley, Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire addressed the gathering before the start of the afternoon session and said "ESREC has put together an interesting and enjoyable event and it is wonderful to see the local diversity".



*Gman
interviews
Hassan Ali –
European
Kick Boxing
Champion*

East Staffordshire Racial Equality Council gratefully acknowledges all the financial support received from:

East Staffs Borough Council.	PASS
Trent and Dove Housing.	BCU Fund
Staffordshire County Council.	Burton College
Staffordshire Police.	Closing the Gap
Consolidated Charity.	Shobnall Parish Council

In bringing the festival to a close, Cllr. Dennis Fletcher, Chair of ESREC thanked everyone.
 “It has been a brilliant day and it is wonderful to see the cultural richness and diversity of the community”.
 He thanked the staff, volunteers, stall holders, the funding bodies and the participants.

Our Member of Parliament, Andrew Griffiths was delighted to attend the festival. He also spoke at the beginning of the afternoon session. He said “I am very pleased to attend the festival, it is a good way of learning and getting to know each other. It helps to improve community cohesion and I would like to thank ESREC for organising an enjoyable event”.

OUTCOME

We appreciate all of the input from steering group and support in helping to make this festival a success.

We thank our staff members Hopeton Gordon (GMan) and Angela Bailey. They worked tirelessly from the inception of the idea of the festival through to the hosting. Our thanks also go to Charlotte Bodger of East Staffs Borough Council’s Parks Department. From day one Charlotte supported and advised us on many occasions to ensure every safety aspect was covered.

We had a very successful event. There were 13 diverse community performing acts entertaining the crowd, 10 service providers giving information on health, safety, education, environment and fire.

There were 12 private stall holders selling items of interest and several activities to keep the children entertained.

We had well over 2,000 people attending the festival. We achieved our objective in bringing diverse communities together, providing an opportunity to engage with service providers and having a fun day with the family. We received good publicity from the Burton Mail. We have also received lots of positive feedback and requests to make this an annual event



*Stephanie
Bendall from
the local
Women’s
Interfaith
Forum
entertained
us during the
afternoon*

This report has been compiled and produced by Anne Grantham East Staffordshire Racial Equality Council