



The Buddy Beat

At



AGEFEST 2013

Monday 18th - Friday 22nd March

A week of FREE events for

**Older People taking place across Renfrewshire
to showcase some of the ways in which you can**

STAY FIT AND HEALTHY

& to help connect you with others!



March 21st 2013

With spring allegedly in the air, Buddy Beat is getting back into the community. In 2012 we found that community groups and organisations were seeking our services, but with finances tight for everyone, often we were asked for a “freebie” and sadly we had to sometimes turn events down. We don’t like doing that to anyone, and we were inspired to seek out funding. This is where National Lottery Awards for All come in, and thanks to them Buddy Beat can provide 20 plus musical workshops across the community in Renfrewshire in 2013. Exciting times lie ahead!

Agefest is now in its 3rd year and is a week of free events for older people across Renfrewshire. It showcases ways to stay fit and healthy and also connects people with others. The week of events is very impressive and it must be true to say that the organisation and sheer scale of it all would put the London 2012 Olympics to shame! One of the “drivers” of Agefest is Buddy Beat friend and champion lady, Maggi Boyd. Maggi is a Health Improvement Practitioner - Adults Services within the Renfrewshire Community Health Partnership in Johnstone. Dame Maggi has sought out our services more than a few times over the last few years- “Message in a Bottle” and “Quest for a Choir” to name a few and we are always happy to oblige.

Things kicked off on the 18th March with a 2 hour variety programme at St Mirren Park (not a bad place to go to after Saints sensationally won the League Cup the day before!). Tom’s dad James went along with some of his buddies from Hillside View Nursing Home in Paisley and he said of it, beaming like the proverbial Cheshire cat,- “Great music, super sing-a-long, a fun quiz and a cup of tea with a scone!”

Tuesday 19th saw a Fun Day for residents at Monkdyke Sheltered Housing Complex in Renfrew.

Wednesday 20th was a four hour marathon based in Paisley Lagoon Centre with over 40 stands offering guidance advice (Strathclyde Police, Citizens Advice, Senior Forums , WRVS, ACUMEN and Alzheimer’s Scotland to name but a few). Perhaps the first ever Agefest Games held that day were the most fun. Teams were asked to

register for the 5 events-Curling, Washing Line Challenge, Javelin, Sock Sorting Challenge and Obstacle Relay!



“Fun at the Lagoon” Photo by Maggi Boyd

The javelins were made of foam (for obvious reasons!), and in the Washing Line Challenge points were awarded for quickness and bonus points for neatness. The Sock Sorting Challenge was similarly scored and it must have a hoot to be part of it- I bet there was a single unmatched sock left at the end!

Maggi Boyd reports that 250 people attended this event at The Lagoon, with 40 stalls manned by two people at least on each, and 30 young people from nearby Paisley Grammar came along to lend a helping hand. Maggi says that it was a truly great day with a terrific atmosphere. There was also Tai Chi, line dancing, and traditional games. 6 energetic teams entered the Agefest Games, with medals and cups awarded to the winners, presented by Councillor Ian McMillan who also launched the new edition of the Guide to Health & Wellbeing.

Maggi says “One of the things that I felt was really good was the stalls. We had arranged for the usual services and projects to attend. There was a great variety, and they were all really well attended. But Myra Speirs from the Beechfield Community Centre had arranged for all sorts of community groups to come along and promote what they do. So there was also wine making, allotments,

photography, and two art groups.” -That sounds like a storming success for sure.

Thursday 21st saw Variety Programmes held simultaneously in Elderslie Village Hall (cue Buddy Beat!) and in the McKillop Hall in Lochwinnoch. The week was rounded off in Renfrew Town Hall with the Glasgow Senior Orchestra and WOOPI Choir from Inverclyde. Maggi Boyd reported- “The orchestra today was amazing, this morning’s session, with the memories, the quiz and the sing song, was good enough, but to have the League Cup there, and St Mirren’s goal-scoring legend Steven Thompson too, the oldies were absolutely beside themselves!”

Running concurrent with all of these events were a week of activities in the ROAR Clubs (from Paisley to Johnstone, to Linwood to Houston to Bishopton.) ROAR stands for Reaching Older Adults in Renfrewshire; see www.roar-renfrewshire.org.

What was our remit today? Well, we were in the Elderslie Village Hall and Buddy Beat was part of the entertainment alongside the Young at Heart Tappers and an Agefest fun quiz. A mixture of drums and Boomwhackers were on the cards and also a jolly good sing-a-long! It sounded too good to miss!

The Buddy Beat crew (small in number but still perfectly formed) were- Dr Jane Bentley, Tom Chalmers, Anne Dowie, Eileen McGrory and Sandy Smith.

And so the big day arrived and began in the morning with our regular Buddy Beat Thursday session. We used that to plan our strategy for the afternoon. We discussed what musical piece we would do and this resulted in a “mash-up” of our well known Funky Lunch, and a not too familiar number of ours, London Bridge, which has its own history. Back in June 2008, Buddy Beat was booked for only our

2nd event and this was at an Occupational Therapy conference in the Scottish Youth Theatre in Glasgow. We had prepared for this by creating our own piece "London Bridge". It went down very well, but as we progressed as a group, this tune went onto the top shelf. Never performed publicly again, we would sometimes take it back down off the shelf and dust it off. In early 2011 we tweaked and pulled it to within an inch of its life and again more recently and it is arguably our most powerful and complex composition. And the result of this mash-up was "Funky London" and it sounded rather splendid. We also opted for a spot of singing and practiced with Boomwhackers too, for no audience gets the chance to just sit and watch. With an hour or so between the end of our session and our meeting time at Elderslie, Tom invited Jane, Eileen, Anne & Sandy back to his place. New for 2013, Tom's Diner is a non-profit making organisation offering hot & cold beverages and a generous selection of delicious chocolate biscuits (the gang made the best of it).



The Banana Bunch at Tom's Diner-

The chances of us all choosing yellow that day were a million to one!



We arrived at the Elderslie Village Hall and tip-toed inside with the Agefest quiz already under way, and set ourselves up.

We took to the floor at 1.20, beginning with Funky London and it ripped along and sounded great in the hall. There may have been just the five of us, but we rocked and we could see the audience, who were just feet away, smiling and tapping their hands and feet in time to the music. Jane brought us to a close and the audience really showed their appreciation. Jane introduced us and then informed the hall that we were going to sing a song. It was of course, O Ye Narimbo, our African welcoming chant. We crooned away, repeated it twice, adding a quiet drum rhythm to the tune and once again the audience lapped it up with their applause.



Jane then told everyone that it was their turn to make some noise and we all handed out Boomwhackers, which seemed to get the ladies and gentlemen a little excited. On one side we had red and yellow Boomwhackers and on the other green and orange.



Jane instructed each side to play four simple beats and then had each side of the room playing alternatively. Having mastered step one, Jane then gave each colour their own beat to repeat. Sandy, Anne, Eileen and Tom took a colour each, to give the audience someone to follow. Jane set us off and you could see the eyes widen and the smiles grow as we all heard the four different rhythms playing simultaneously. These can be special moments that you really have to take part of to appreciate. Phase 3, Buddy Beat took to the drums and Jane split the hall into three groups, from front to back, and each had

a short jamming session where any rhythm could be played. With 50 or more in the room, it was a sure fire rock star delivery.

That had been a lot of Boomwhacking and it was time to give the audience's palms a rest. Jane posed the question "Would you like to learn a song?" which prompted an instant and resounding "Yes!" Jane then added that she would teach them "O Ye Narimbo" explaining that we still are unable to translate the words, so we would be ordering a fish supper for all we know! And over the space of five or six minutes, we had the hall singing in African and it was time to put it into practice for a rousing finale. Jane said that those wishing to take to the Boomwhackers again were free to do so, while others opted to just sing and Buddy Beat sang and drummed at the same time. We have often sung this at our weekly meetings and there may have been a dozed or fifteen of us warbling away quite merrily. Neither of us had been part of a sixty strong choir before and we raised the roof! It seemed as though we were in Africa and I wouldn't have been at all surprised if an antelope had sped by or a lion had roared from the back of the hall! It was simply magic and when we all finished there was a lot of happy people around, laughing and chatting. Tom overheard a lady at the front telling her friend "I never thought when I got up this morning that I would have been doing that! What a lovely change!" As we gathered the Boomwhackers in (they are not free gifts after all!) Eileen, Sandy and Anne all heard similar comments on how much they had enjoyed themselves. That's what it is all about!





We had earned a break and next on the agenda were the Young at Heart Tappers, a dance troupe of ladies who are all in the 60 to 88 age range. They looked glamorous in their matching dresses complete with bling and danced to three numbers, going down a treat.

After they had vacated the stage, one of their ladies, Laura, came back on. Laura then sang two songs; "As Long as He Needs Me" from the musical Oliver and then Puccini's "Oh My Beloved Father". Laura went down a storm and she was egged on to sing another. She did so, stating that she was only filling in time while the tea brewed! She ended with "Why Did I Choose You?" a song made famous by Barbra Streisand and Jonny Mathis amongst others. Laura was applauded with vigour and it was then time for tea and scones.



*Tom & Anne
taking time out*





The Young at Heart tappers came back on afterwards for a couple of routines, this time dressed as 1920's Flappers and this got the audience clapping along.

Just before the singing began, a lady called Maureen entertained us all with a bit of stand-up comedy and her three jokes had everyone laughing along.

At 3pm it was time for Jane to take to the floor to lead a Singing Memories session. Singing Memories is one of Jane's other babies, created with Occupation Therapist Tamasine Speath. This is a regular get together for Dementia patients, their carers and families. It is not a choir, but a chance to get together and sing some old songs, some new songs and generally have fun. Singing Memories Renfrewshire meets each every Tuesday from 6.30 to 8.00 pm in Paisley's Wallneuk North Church in Abercorn Street. See www.singingmemories.net for further info.



Jane moved into the centre of the hall to be nearer to everyone, and was joined by Tom and Anne on the drums, to provide a gentle and supporting back beat to the singing. In the next half hour, playing her Ukulele, Jane helped the hall relax and meander back down memory lane with such songs as "The Campdown Ladies", "These Boots Are Made for Walking", "King of the Road" and a new one to Buddy Beat ears, the rather beautiful "Bella Mama." As a drummer it is so relaxing and peaceful to sit and play along with the singing and it was a joy to be part of. Sandy and Eileen helped hand out songsheets and joined in with the singing, which ensured that we all got the benefit.



And that was the end of that. We all agreed that it had been an excellent afternoon. Agefest is clearly a terrific festival in Renfrewshire and judging from our time at Elderslie, Maggi's testimony and Tom's father's experience; it can only have reached out to many hundreds of people across Renfrewshire, getting them involved and connecting with their communities. We hope that Buddy Beat can be involved with Agefest in 2014!

Words by Tom Chalmers

Pictures by Jane, Tom, Anne, Eileen & Sandy

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