

Wild4Life Breakthrough

Call of the Wild – a young person's voice

Evaluation report by Lauren M (Breakthrough mentee), of a forest skills programme at the Cherry Wood project, Marshfield involving young people supported by the Breakthrough project and Wild4Life project.



'It's not every day that you can see kids having fun without aid of any technology. Yes you just read right - kids having a good time without phones, TV's or computers! This time nature was the children's game for the day and they were pretty engrossed by it, dare I say!

It's all thanks to a fantastic project called Wild4Life, which takes young people to woodlands to learn the lessons of the wilderness. The candidates were picked by Breakthrough, an organisation that gives young people opportunities to experience new and exciting things. The session I went along to, was the third activity day out of five. In each of these days the group take part in woodland activities such as learning how to build shelters, make campfires and other adventurous activities!

The woodland that I had the pleasure to visit was called Cherry Wood and it was simply stunning! Sweet scent of garlic surrounded me, bright green blankets, a true beauty. A natural city of wonder. It had plenty of space and materials to accommodate their activities. There was a natural spring there for water; plants were growing for food, animals for produce and trees all around for firewood. A perfect place for woodland conservation in my opinion.

But Cherry Wood doesn't only do activities for just children and charities, it runs apprenticeships, carpentry and bush craft workshops too for all ages and all people, so check out Cherry Wood if you can. I certainly recommend it!

The person who runs it: Tim Gatfield, who was formerly in the army, talked to me about the place and how they live off the land there. They have a fantastic outdoor kitchen, picturesque views and a forest bursting with leafy goodness. It was just like walking in Narnia, minus the snow and the mythical creatures! Humming the mission impossible theme tune I followed Rowena Kenny... who runs Wild4Life, Jonathan Wheeler of Breakthrough mentoring and my own mentor Charlie Mathias into the area where the kids were taking part in a tracking game where there were trying to shoot each other with water ...blindfolded! I narrowly escaped being under attack from multiple sprays of water. And that was only in the first five minutes of me being there.

You truly are somewhere amazing and magical and do truly expect a scene from a fantasy film to play out in front of your eyes! Watching and talking to the children I think they believed that too. My inner child certainly was awakened in the short time I was there.

Despite the manic running and game partaking, the kids I talked to described it as amazing, good and calm and I could see why! It was a strong, effective outlet for their seemingly endless energy. At the end I could barely get a response from the exhausted adventurers!

I guess the point of this article apart from me rambling about how fantastic my experience was and the brilliant organisations, people and projects involved, is to open people's eyes to see more than their TV screens and social networking sites. To truly see what a beautiful place we live in. To see these amazing, strong organisations change young people's lives before their eyes. To witness the wonders outside your doorstep.

Kids, it's possible to have a good time outside without the crutch of computers and television. Go get involved in these sorts of activities! You definitely won't regret it. Adults, spread the word and give an opportunity to someone, trust me I'm only young but I can see how much a positive experience it is for...well anyone!

Signing out for now,

Lauren M.

Visit: www.southglos.gov.uk/wild4life and www.cherrywoodproject.co.uk

