

Windermere embraces Waldorf

At the start of 2016 we were delighted to be asked by the Parry Family Charitable Foundation to be part of their *Waldorf Experience* programme: afternoons of "High Tea with Song and Music" for the elderly. At Windermere School, service is an integral part of our curriculum and when the lower sixth form were asked about helping with this new initiative the number of pupils who signed up was such that we had to put in a selection process. Two of the successful students wrote after the first event in April, "*When the opportunity to be involved in the Waldorf Experience arose, we knew it would be a great chance to do something different, we relished the chance to make people feel special. It was so lovely seeing people enjoying the live music, eating cake and creating new friendships*".

The Foundation gave us the structure of how the experience would work but asked us to put our own slant on the events allowing the pupils to explore different ways to bridge the gap between the young and old and make the *Waldorf* afternoons a truly joyful and special experience.

As we started to plan for the first event in April the enthusiasm for the project grew. Meetings with outside agencies such as Age Concern, Dignity in Dementia and the Local District Nurse Hub were all very positive resulting in a list of people in the community who would really benefit from *Waldorf*. Both the Foundation



and our school put the highest priority on making all our guests feel special. Lots of people associated with the school expressed an interest in getting involved offering their help with transport, flowers, music, setting up and hosting. This wave of positivity meant that we knew, if the team were able to bring the programme to life, the *Waldorf Experience* would be a great success. The onus was therefore on the team; hosts, caterers, musicians and supporters, to make it work.

One of the things, before the first *Waldorf*, we were most concerned about was our guests not feeling confident to break the ice and start talking to each other especially at the start of the afternoon. It was decided that one of our visiting music teachers Richard Grey would play the piano as people arrived creating a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. To

be honest we need not have worried about the lack of conversation, people wanted to talk, with each other and the pupils and the vibrancy in the room was very soon evident. Janet McCallum our Head of Music commented *"Both events have been full of life and energy, the people who have attended have shone with enjoyment of the whole situation"*.

As people arrived at the front door they were greeted and introduced to their host for the afternoon. It was lovely to see the pupils make huge efforts to create an atmosphere where their guests felt both comfortable and, of course, special.

The afternoons started with a cup of tea accompanied by some very gentle and soothing musical pieces played by students on harp and flute. One gentleman, who suffered with Parkinsons Disease, enjoyed these pieces so much that they brought a tear to his eye.

From the outset it was felt by Nick Kirkpatrick, Windermere's General Services manager, that the food needed to be extra special. He sourced items locally and his team produced a spread which rivalled any top London Hotel!! So many of our guests said that they felt



spoilt and the items they had eaten had all been excellent. Mary Christmas, one of our guests, confided in one of the hosts that it was the best lemon drizzle cake she had tasted and asked could she have a little piece to take home.

Nick said *"For my catering team this has been another great step towards positive interaction with our local community. It has brought Windermere School and the local people closer together and we have been delighted to be asked by the Foundation to be part of this project. I am looking forward to the next Waldorf Experience."*



The music programme was put together by Janet and her talented students and on paper looked impressive embracing instrumental pieces from the Browhead Ensemble, songs from the Girls Chamber Choir and a lighter approach from the Orrest Musical Theatre players. But what a treat we had in store from the actual performances - they were wonderful exceeding all our expectations. The standard set by the musicians was exceptional and what was created was stunning.

It was agreed that we should have a song which would be associated with the *Waldorf Experience*. After some discussion it was decided to trial the beautiful hymn "Be still my Soul". The Girls Chamber Choir accompanied by Ian Pattinson on piano gave the rest of us, guests and hosts alike, the confidence to really sing out at the end of the event and many of them talked about the joy that part of the afternoon produced.

Taffy and Chrissi Thomas wrote to us to say *"Thank you for the most wonderful afternoon, delicious food and really professional music. We loved having the chance to join in and sing at the end of the afternoon"*. Many of our guests took the words and music away with them so we hope they have continued to sing out at home.

We are pleased that so much worked at our first two events. It has given us a great platform to build on for future *Waldorf Experience* afternoons.



Rita from Windermere wrote to say *"Many, many thanks for having invited Brian and me to join you and the other guests for the Waldorf Experience. It was a magical afternoon, the food was delicious, the singing and the musicians fantastic and the company great. We enjoyed every minute and wish you every success with your future events. Robert, Lucy and Will, our hosts, were delightful company, and we wish them well in their future careers."*

Perhaps Daphne from Bowness who wanted to let us know how she felt summed up the views of most *"I was so happy to be invited to your school. I was made to feel so special by everyone and please could I be invited every time!!"*

It is clear we need to create a network of professionals to help identify people in the community who would enjoy and benefit from *Waldorf*. We are meeting in late August with twelve different representatives of care organisations to use their combined expertise to set up a team that will enable us to reach out to more and more people in the South Lakes.

We are all excited about our next event in the autumn and are now also planning for the *"Concert with Canapes"*, early in 2017. A big thank you to everyone who has been involved and we at Windermere School are so pleased to be working in partnership with the Foundation in creating something special for some very special guests.