

YMCA Neath Newsletter

Welcome to YMCA Neath's first 'Good News' newsletter. YMCA Neath has been an established force in Neath since 1871 residing in various properties in Neath until occupying the present building in Pen Y Dre from 1961. We have provided various services for the community ever since including martial arts, football sessions, discos and a well-remembered youth club and tuck shop.

In recent months however, we have undergone profound changes in increasing and expanding the variety of services, classes and amenities on offer in our centre. We have acquired a new manager Ms Claire Hicks and many of the staff have changed roles and/ or are undertaking training with a view to enhancing or changing their current roles. We have also recruited three new members of staff to expand our team. We need to mention our dedicated and hardworking volunteers that we have acquired in the past few months without who we would struggle to provide the high level of service which we aspire to. As a result of this flurry of activity here is our first 'Good News' newsletter, hopefully the first of many!



We have a new range of classes and groups on offer such as our Friendship Circle, Walking Football, LGBTQ+ Youth Group and a No Limits Women's Support Group. We have also opened our very successful charity shop!

We hope to give you a flavour of these within this newsletter, watch this space for more exciting developments. Welcome to Neath's new and improved YMCA!

Our gym has been increasingly busy since the closing of the YMCA due to COVID 19. We run a friendly, welcoming community gym that is open Mondays to Saturdays 8:45 - 20:45, We have a wide range of equipment and our gym is used by varied clientele. We chat to many of our members who have been coming for years but we have had an increase in footfall over recent months with 72 new members joining us in 2023.



We have also had some good news with a new addition to the YMCA Gym, Tre a volunteer who is currently performing inductions to our new gym members. We hope to expand the list of services we currently offer at our gym with Tre on board to spearhead some of the initiatives. Watch this space!



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Martial Arts

We run a wide programme of Martial Arts classes here at YMCA Neath, from Ninjutsu through to Kung Fu. These are largely run by volunteers and are one of the most popular classes is Judo Seniors and Juniors which is run by Sensei Ian Cardy.

Judo have had some great news over the last few months.

Adam Cardy son of Ian Cardy has achieved First Dan at the Welsh Judo Dan Grading, congratulations Adam!



Ellis and Macson competed at the school's championship. It was a great effort with Ellis achieving Gold. Watch this space for further Martial Arts news in our next newsletter.



Friendship Circle

Following discussions between our YMCA Wellbeing Officer Sarah Hemington and NPT Local Area Co-ordinator Adam Humphries we realised there was an immediate need to have somewhere that people were able to come and socialise. A safe space for the vulnerable, isolated and lonely. From that we established our Friendship Circle. Our first session was held on the 8th November 2022 where around 7 people attended. Providing a welcoming space for those looking to create new friendships.



Initially it was a simple concept of tea, biscuits and conversation. Since then we have grown not only in numbers (20+) but also we have been delighted to introduce a weekly quiz or bingo as well as schedule of weekly crafts and a dart board. Our wonderful group is growing and evolving constantly. Such lovely positive feedback has been given from members and it reaffirms the necessity for groups such as these to counteract the lack of social equality that we are faced with today and even more so in this current climate.



The YMCA are excited to see what this initiative will further create, where it will lead and the difference it will make to peoples lives in 2023.



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Maths Revision Classes

A brand new initiative for our YMCA is that we implemented n Friday 17th February, a Maths revision group focusing on KS3 and KS4 studies.

With Maths being an integral part of our curriculum, it is evident that there is a real need for all children to be able to access affordable academic support. Although, this is a new concept for us, we are confident that it will be welcomed and appreciated by those that utilise it. We have a wonderful volunteer, fully qualified maths tutor Lynda Thomas leading the group and we are all very grateful for her time and effort, which will be enable this to become a success.



Baby Bank

YMCA Neath Baby Bank - the cost of living crisis effects us all. YMCA Neath recognises that families with babies and very young children have extra costs to bare. Regardless of benefit or employment status, we would like to help those who need some extra support with baby essentials. We give everything as a gift, with no expectations of return. Since opening late 2022 we have helped 54 families.

Fundraising

We have been lucky to have secured a marathon runner Chris Brown who completed the London Marathon for us in 2022. The funding raised was somewhere in the region of £2,000. We are very grateful to all the effort Chris put in. We are once again fortunate to have a runner in this year's London Marathon, Joshua Hatton. We have been sharing Josh's efforts on social media and to date he has raised £1, 010. We wish Josh every success and are most grateful to him for all the effort he is putting in. Good luck Josh from us all at the YMCA!



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LGBTQ+ Youth Group

We decided to establish an LGBTQ+ Youth Group here at the YMCA Neath, something that was much needed but had previously never been undertaken. It is run by staff member LGBTQ+ Mentor Sarah Elias with support from the rest of the team. We also have two volunteers Evan and Olivia Elias.



The first session was in November 2022 on a Friday evening and had three attendees but there was a lot of fun and laughter and a desire to expand the group. We have over the sessions, created a safe space for young people to explore their identity, make friends and feel supported and valued members of the community. The group now has around twenty members after five sessions and we offer a varied activity programme focusing mainly on crafts which enable young people to express themselves through their work but also allow for relaxation and promote the making of friends. We have forged meaningful connections within the group with participants socialising outside of the group.

We have advertised in schools and colleges and extensively online with an excellent response. We have an active social media presence with group members participating regularly.

Past sessions include activities such as magnet making, collage workshops, learn to knit workshops and movie and pizza night. We hope to expand our activities to include outdoor sessions such as vegetable and wildflower planting, we are also collaborating with Buglife Cymru to participate in their B-Lines project to help preserve the future of our pollinators. We endeavour to facilitate trips for the group including to Pride events and educational venues such as museums, art galleries etc but mostly we want our members to feel safe, supported and able to access support if necessary and to make friends and have fun along the way.



We are celebrating LGBTQ+ history month with a display in the YMCA and making pronoun pins in the group session. Long live our LGBTQ+ group at YMCA Neath!



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