
THE WALLOPS PRE-SCHOOL NEWS

This continues to be a difficult time for all of us, and I would like to say a massive thank you to all of the Pre-School staff and parents for sharing their wonderful 'home-school' ideas and showing fantastic community spirit. The staff have been amazing at engaging the children in online story readings, circle time and singing sessions, and sharing ideas for activities and development. They have even delivered activity packs to each child's door. This really goes to show the incredible team we have supporting our children, so THANK YOU Sian, Ashley, Svenja and Lynne.

The parents have been equally inventive with ideas and have been posting pictures online to share with each other. I have loved seeing the variety of activities; baking, model making, bug hunting, scissor control, shape sorting, assault courses and even learning to ride bikes. WELL DONE parents – you have been incredible at showing your children how fun learning should be and have demonstrated how our community can really pull together. ☺

We do have so much to appreciate, but on another note, this unprecedented time will come at a great cost to us. At the start of the lockdown we aimed to remain open for children of key workers but, since there was no demand, we closed (temporarily). The DfE guidance explicitly stated that "The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme means that for employees who are not working but kept on payroll, the government will contribute 80% of each worker's wages of up to £2500, backdated to 1 March 2020. Settings can access this scheme while continuing to be paid the early years entitlements funding via local authorities." Our staff were therefore furloughed on the understanding that 80% of their wages would be covered and they would have jobs to return to when we reopened.

However, guidance released on 17th April introduced last minute changes to this scheme, placing limits on the level of support available to childcare providers in receipt of 'free entitlement' funding. After much research and investigation, we established that we could potentially only claim 20% of staff wages (and that is still uncertain). We are not entitled to business grants, or charity support, as the government has said we should use our funding to cover costs, but this simply is not enough to pay our staff what they were promised.

The Early Years Sector was already struggling financially, and the unexplained removal of this support puts our future at significant risk. In a 'normal' year we have to fundraise £3000, but we have already had to cancel several events, leaving our funds significantly depleted. We live from one month to the next with careful budgeting and management from unpaid committee volunteers. This leaves us at a very uncertain point because if we pay our staff the 80% agreed furloughed wage, we risk closure due to lack of funds. If we do not pay our staff what was promised, we risk losing them, and they are the heart of everything we do.

We have urged our local MP to support us, but are also reaching out to the local community for ideas or support during this difficult time.

A small way you can support us is through *Easy Giving*, which donates money whenever you shop online:

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/thewallopsps

We have also set up a *Just Giving* page and if you would like to donate we would be extremely grateful:

www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/thewallopspreschool Regd Charity Number: 1027625

Thank you and STAY SAFE.

Tommie Gross

THE LATE JOHN DUCKWORTH – A HEARTFELT THANK YOU

John loved living in the Wallops. I wish to thank all the generous and caring people of the Wallops who have helped me through the difficult time while John was struggling in hospital and after his death.

His sister in Canada and I are greatly comforted by your kind words about John and by the wonderful

demonstration of appreciation for him as we drove to his beautiful woodland burial site.

Donations if desired to Stars Appeal-Coronavirus help Your Hospital Heroes c/o I N Newman Ltd, Griffin House, 55 Winchester Street, Salisbury, SP1 1HL

Rosemary Martin-Jones