

Summerhill News

A.S. Neill's Summerhill School; a co-educational boarding school in Suffolk, England, is the original alternative 'free' school. Founded in 1921, it continues to be an influential model for progressive, democratic education around the world.



Welcome to this, our fifth edition of the Summerhill School Newsletter. In this edition, amongst other things you can read about our successful fundraising event, the new Summerhill Photographer's website, the school trip to the Museum of Childhood and ex pupil, Carla Lipp's memories of her time at Summerhill... enjoy.

Fundraising evening

On Wednesday 19th March, kids from school, ex pupils, parents, staff and friends of Summerhill helped to make the A. S. Neill Summerhill Trust's fundraising event in London a huge success.



After guests had mingled and enjoyed their first drink, the evening got underway with a welcome speech by Mark Vaughan OBE (ex pupil and trustee)

Who set the scene for the purpose of the celebratory evening, namely the outstanding 2007 Ofsted report and the very successful BBC Children's drama 'Summerhill'. By celebrating such good times at Summerhill it was hoped that a substantial amount of money could be raised to promote the work of A. S. Neill and subsidise some places for children at the school. (picture: Ron Cook and Zoë Readhead reading the Ofsted reports)

The lights were dimmed and we were treated to an edited showing of the children's drama 'Summerhill' which was followed by Red Ram's (Will Readhead and his production team) ten minute short film on the making of the drama – a film of the film! Ron Cook, who played the lead baddie, then shared the stage with Zoë to give humorous readings from two very contrasting Ofsted reports. The films were great reminders of the enduring magic of Summerhill and the

readings highlighted how much the Ofsted Inspectorate had changed their attitudes for the better.

Delicious food was served to everyone who wanted it, there was a "shop" selling Summerhill goodies throughout and the bar (run by Derek and Misha) did good business all evening. After a short break, the Mastermind Quiz was hosted by Michael Newman (ex teacher and trustee) and each table answered questions centred around the specialist subject of A. S. Neill and Summerhill. Most of us did very well but were beaten outright by a large table of very well informed ex Summerhillians who won a bottle of champagne!

Then Will and Nathalie hosted the auction of gifts and promises, and many guests were extremely generous, bidding for things like holiday home breaks, jewellery, a picture, a singing lesson, a book etc. After Michael had given us the quiz answers, the raffle was drawn and the evening ended in style with some music and singing from several Summerhill bands. (picture: one of the Summerhill bands)



At the end of the evening, many people said how much they had enjoyed the event and hoped it would be repeated...so watch this space.

Finally, the trustees would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who came along on the night to support the Trust.

“Your generosity enabled us to raise a total of £2,925”.

Special thanks go to those who donated gifts and promises for the auction and also prizes for the raffle – we couldn't have done it without you. Last but by no means least, a big thank you to the trustees, school staff, parents and everyone else who played a part in organising the evening which went so smoothly.

(picture: The quiz winners)



Kate's 100th Birthday

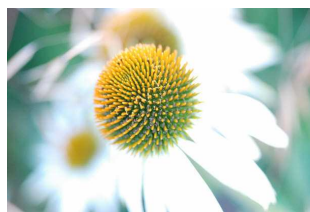
Kate Mackinnon and her husband, Bill, taught at Summerhill many years ago. Later they worked at Kilquanity School. Kate will be 100 years old on 27th May 2008. Kate cannot get around easily but still lives at home with excellent support. Anyone connected with Summerhill who knew her and Bill can write to congratulate her at Ashbank, Kippford, Dumfries and Galloway, DG5 4LN. Or you can contact Steven Dorner at 30, Collingwood House, WIW 6BE, for details of how her family plan to celebrate her birthday.

Summerhill Photography Website



Earlier this year, an exciting new website was launched to promote photographs taken by current and ex pupils, and staff. Built by ex pupil Charlie Ramm, the site is designed to publicise the creative work of those who have a connection with Summerhill. "With digital photos often not seeing the light of day, we wanted to give people the opportunity to get their work off their hard-drives and into the public domain", said Tomo, ex pupil and house parent. (picture by Tomo).

The style of photography is varied and pictures are presented in a gallery format against a stylish black background. This lifts them from the page and makes each image highly viewable. It is possible the site could develop into a showcase for creative arts but that will very much depend on the membership. To view, join or upload your work to the website, visit www.summerhill-photographers.co.uk. Tink, Hil or Tomo will be pleased to consider your application to publish on the site. (picture by Tink).



CIVITAS Seminar

In October last year, Zoë was invited to join twelve others at the Palace of Westminster to discuss experiences of being inspected by Ofsted. The seminar was organised by CIVITAS (The Institute for the Study of Civil Society) and the participants were invited to comment on four speaker's experiences. Comments were sent to Barry Sheerman MP with a view to writing a booklet summarising the views and ideas that came from the seminar.

Oxfam in Education

Also in October last year, Zoë was again invited to London to take part in one of several seminars organised by Oxfam with a view to putting together an education agenda for the 21st century.

Oxfam Education works in Great Britain to advocate for Education for Global Citizenship. Oxfam believes that a new

vision for education in England is needed if we are to support all children and young people to overcome the challenges and thrive on the opportunities of a fast changing and interdependent world. The profound changes taking place in our lives demand a review of our current teaching, assessment and inspection policies.

A selection of people from interesting and unusual schools attended the seminar bringing a wealth of diverse experiences. "It was a really good day", said Zoë, "It was clear to me that we have long been doing many of the new approaches that people wanted".

Zoë visits Germany

Also during the Autumn term last year, Zoë was invited to speak at the Free School Conference in Marberg and a Congress in Braeman, entitled 'Emotional first aid and primary prevention – self regulation from the beginning'.

Memories of Summerhill

The following is an extract from a recent letter to Zoë....
Dear Zoë, My name is Carla Lipp and I stayed at your school just after World War Two. I was the first pupil coming from liberated Europe, to be precise I came from the Netherlands. My mother had read your father's books and was impressed by them. I was born in 1934 so I think I was twelve years old when I arrived at Summerhill. Ula became my house mother because I could not understand English at that time. I have warm memories of her and your parents. They were always very loving to me and even though I missed my parents and could not understand the language, Neil and Ena made me feel very welcome. I have vivid memories of your parents dancing on a melody that I can still sing. Your mother made me the most beautiful evening dress for the end of term. In that time things were hard to get and it was very special. As you notice I have many good memories of my two years at Summerhill and I feel very privileged to have been at your school even though after the war it was a hard time for everybody. Your parents visited Holland and Joop Aupers (also an old Dutch student from Summerhill) and I showed them around, this was of course many years later. I stayed for only two years because I decided to become a ballet dancer, which I did. At sixteen I was a professional dancer at the Opera in Nice and I am still teaching. (Published with kind permission of Carla Lipp, Netherlands).

Farewell Carmel

Carmel (Shack house parent) will be leaving Summerhill in July 2008 to take up a 'live in position' with her boyfriend in Ipswich. Carmel started work at Summerhill ten years ago as a cook and after her interest in Summerhill developed, she became San house parent during which time she also ran cooking classes for the younger kids. Three years ago she took over as Shack house parent where she has been ever since.

"It's been a very memorable time", said Carmel. "Every day is different and you never know what's going to happen. Most enjoyable has been seeing the kids grow up which has been a real privilege. Then there's the parties, seeing the film being made, special beddies (this is at the end of term when the kids get special treats from the house parent) and the hike to Beccles". We wish Carmel all the very best for the future.

