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CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL HAILED AS A TRIUMPH

Visitors and Organisers of the **3rd Bridgnorth Children's Festival** held over the August Bank Holiday weekend have hailed it as a great success.

The Oldbury Wells School playing fields were transformed into a massive tented village with a huge array of fun, entertainment, sports and community activities with over 4,500 children, young people and adults attending over the 2 days.

Stephen Derges, Chairman of the Festival comments,

"We're already receiving feedback that this was our most successful Festival so far. In just 3 years we have established ourselves as the premier family-based free entry Festival in the West Midlands. Despite all the predictions the weather was just right – not too hot but warm enough to encourage families to come along for a great couple of days out. In fact we have had probably the best 2 days weather-wise of August and we made the most of it!"

A number of new activities were provided this year and the Climbing Wall provided by 'Closer to the Edge' was extremely popular as were the Comic Book drawing sessions with James Parsons of the Crazy Comic Club. Pottery making was provided by Alan Murphy and there was always a crowd around the Scalextric track.

One of the most popular attractions was The Animal Man with children and even some adults being brave enough to handle the amazing range of snakes, spiders and lizards – we have the photographic evidence to prove it!

A vast array of talent was on display in the Entertainment Zone headed up by Bridgnorth's own Disco Daddy and as usual the Sports Zone was very popular with Lee Matthews Blackbelt Academy, Bridgnorth's Table Tennis & Lawn Tennis Clubs plus Wolverhampton Wanderers all involved in coaching and skills training.

Festival Activities Organiser Mark Gibbons commented,

"Our aim is to provide unique experiences for children. Although some of them will have had a go at climbing a wall or making pottery before at school, to be able to have their parents watch them and be involved with them is a real thrill. All the hard work involved in organising the Festival is worthwhile when we see the enjoyment and smiles on the faces of adults and children alike."

The Festival organisers also praised the involvement of the local community service organisations.

Karen Gibbons, Festival Volunteers Co-ordinator says,

"It was wonderful to have support from West Mercia Police, Shropshire Fire & Rescue and the Bridgnorth District Council Community Arts team helped create a marvellous atmosphere with their Artsplay activities. In addition having DCAE Cosford with their ejector seats and other safety equipment displays was a real bonus. Other local community groups such as Guides and Scouts plus Stacey's Trust and the Shropshire Wildlife Trust helped show the diversity of local interest groups.

We were also grateful to Bridgnorth Youth Centre for their involvement in mask and badge making activities."

Another new attraction was the stomach-churning gyro spinner which alongside the bungee trampoline which was introduced last year gave the adventurous a real adrenaline rush experience. Central Galaxy Trampoline Club provided demonstrations and the opportunity to have a go and as always the skateboard/BMX ramps were in demand.

Local churches were involved providing entertainment with Duggie Dug Dug and team, Open the Book storytellers and Sustainable Bridgnorth provided information on protecting our environment as well as giving away free low energy light bulbs.

Probably the most popular activity was the inflatables provided by Bridgnorth Bouncy Castles who have always supported the Festival. At just a £1 per day for all-day bouncing many adults found themselves watching their children using up all their energy before going home excited but tired.

Festival organisers say that they have been overwhelmed by the positive comments they have received.

Stephen Derges says,

"My wife – who with me had the original idea for the Festival – was selling programmes and one lady on the second commented that she and her family always come for both days. I received an email on my return home on Monday night from a mum who was disappointed that she and her 4-year old son only came on the Monday – she felt that they had missed 50% of the fun by only coming the one day.

Other people visiting the Festival told me how much they appreciated the wide range of activities so we know we are providing a great weekend of activities.

Local councillors who attended also expressed their appreciation for not only putting on the Festival but also for helping the local economy by attracting visitors to the town. "

Last word goes to Mark Gibbons,

"Each year we have tried to include new activities and we're learning all the time those which attract families and where we need to improve. We are happy to hear from people who attended and visitors can email us via the website with suggestions.

Naturally we will be undertaking a full evaluation process over the next few weeks ahead of deciding how the Children's Festival will develop in the future, so please let us know what you think. "

The Children's Festival website provides information and will be updated with feedback and photographs over the next few weeks: www.childrens-festival.co.uk

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Notes for Editors

The Children's Festival took place on **Sunday 24th and Monday 25th August 2008** (the Bank Holiday weekend) at **Oldbury Wells School** site.

The organising team includes senior teaching professionals, members of the business community, youth workers and advisors. County, Town and District Councillors have pledged their support.

The Festival website is www.childrens-festival.co.uk. Photos from the website may be used by the media on condition that they accompany Festival reports.

All of the schools in the local area have pledged support for the Festival.

Individuals working directly with young people as part of this initiative will comply with CRB checking processes.

The Children's Festival is organised by a charitable company.

Who to contact:

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