



# Maerdy Community Newsletter



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Maerdy

Funded by Communities First

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## *Merry Christmas from the Maerdy Newsletter Team*

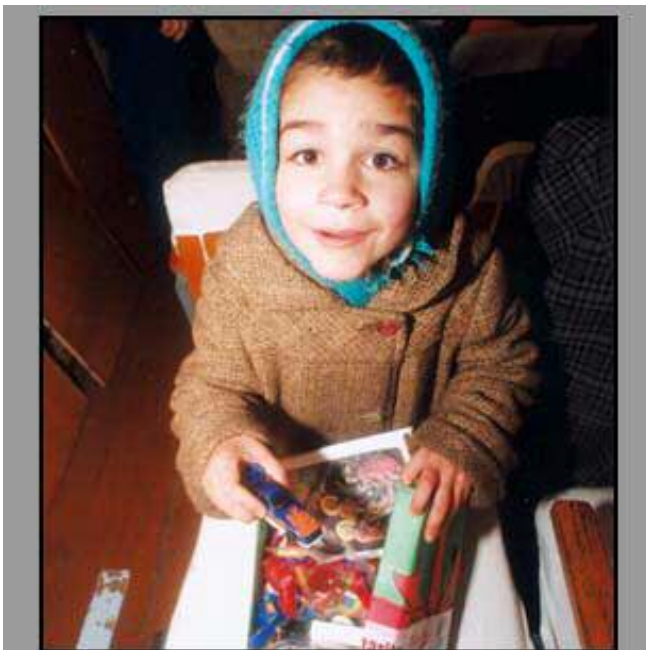
This is final issue of the newsletter for this year so let's start by wishing you all the compliments of the season and that you all have a good 2004.

In this issue we bring you an interim report on the audit results together an outline of the proposals being forwarded that form the 3~5 year plan for the Maerdy ward. We also have a number of articles featuring the people of Maerdy and a flavour of what is happening in Maerdy over the festive season.

We want this newsletter to be for you, the residents of the Maerdy Ward. If we just go on about Communities First, you'll soon get tired of us. So we want to hear from all organizations, associations and voluntary groups working in Maerdy. If you think we can help or you wish to contribute to the newsletter, contact Ros Davis at the office in Teify House on **01443 755687** or any of the Newsletter Team. We look forward to hearing from you

## *Operation Christmas Child*

Every Christmas for the last 6 years, the residents of Maerdy have waved goodbye to hundreds of shoe-boxes filled with trinkets, toys and sweets and this year promises to be no different.



In 1990, Dave Cooke, a businessman from Chester, had a vision to send shoeboxes filled with Christmas presents to children living in deprived countries. The first time the lorries left Wrexham, they had just 3000 shoeboxes on board – last year they had 1.25million.

Last year's boxes from Maerdy joined 51,000 others at Talbot Green to start on their journey from South Wales to several eastern European countries.

For Maerdy this is truly a whole community effort:

- the Ladies Sewing Group produced some beautiful hand-made pencil-cases
- The older ladies have been knitting mountains of hats, gloves and scarves throughout the year
- the Community School have taken up causes in recent years to help their contemporaries in

less fortunate

This is a cause for all mums and dads to adopt this year if they feel, as most of us do, that we don't know what to give our children for Christmas because they have so much already. Why not give them a chance to fill just one shoebox with gifts for a child who owns very little besides?

If you want to take part, the shoeboxes will be accepted in Seion in Maerdy road until the 17<sup>th</sup> of November and at any Co-operative store from November 5<sup>th</sup> until about November 20<sup>th</sup>.

There are certain restrictions as to what we are allowed to pack into the boxes – NO second hand toys- No liquids and NO war related toys. Full details are available at Seion.

## *Christmas Hampers for the Elderly*

The Maerdy Youth Centre, which is based at the Community School, has, for over 20 years, undertaken a project to distribute Christmas hampers to the elderly citizens of the ward.



Some members of our community only see our young people in a 'negative light'. An important part of this project is to dispel this perception and show them in a good and positive manner.

The youngsters collect the hamper items before they go on to make and decorate the boxes themselves. The hampers are delivered as close to Christmas as possible and, if past years are anything to go by, the recipients of the hampers will be delighted and all comments about the youngsters will be positive.

10~12 hampers are produced each year by about 8~10 members. They all feel that it is a worthwhile exercise and look forward to it each year.

The youngsters receive Certificates of Achievement for their efforts and this will form part of their Community Education Records of Achievements. More details of the scheme can be

obtained from the Maerdy Youth Centre, Ferndale Community School Campus at the rear of Excelsior Terrace or by phoning 01443 455220

## *Community Day Centre – Teify House*

Rhondda Cynon Taff Borough Council is currently undertaking a review of the use of all Community Day Centres within their area to establish the level of use by the over 50's.

A meeting was held on September 23<sup>rd</sup> at Teify House to discuss the situation. It was well attended and it soon became obvious that there is a wide range of activities taking place within the building.

One major concern identified at the meeting was the standard of the meals provided by Catering Direct. These meals have to be pre-ordered and are prepared at a central kitchen. Most people felt that the quality of the food was not very good and are not taking advantage of these meals. It soon became obvious that the people present wanted meals freshly cooked on the premises.

Catering Direct have now implemented an alternative menu offering a light snack in addition to the main cooked meal menu. Meetings are still being held to try to resolve these problems.



**Teify House is also open on Saturdays and any group of over 50s, who are looking for somewhere to meet, can book a room free of charge. Details are available from the Staff @ Teify House**

## *Spotlight on:- Maerdy Sewing & Knitting Class*

The class meet on Monday evenings from 4.30 to 6 pm at the Community Centre and has been running for about 5 years. Lynda Lewis reports.



Barbara Parry and June Rossiter organise the knitting section where they supervise and guide the children in making soft toys such as teddies, kittens, mice, dolls and ballerinas. Meanwhile, Diane Jones, Ann Jones and Susan Bennett supervise the children in the sewing of cross-stitch pictures ranging from

simple patterns to much larger and more complicated pictures.

There are currently 21 children who attend the classes – 20 girls and 1 boy. Their ages range from 6 years to around 15. The class is full at the moment with a waiting list. If you are interested why not put your name down now to join the group.

The children pay 60p/week, and this includes a drink, biscuits and all materials. Whatever the children make they can take home - free of charge.

Trips are organised for the children – the most recent being to Bristol Zoo. The children make Christmas decorations, Mother's day presents and Easter bunnies and chicks.

As the class is run on a non-profit basis, the group rely on donations of cottons, new wool oddments, pins, needles etc.. So if you have any odd bits of wool etc hanging around they would be much appreciated.

Contact Ann Jones on 755404 for further details or to add your name to the waiting list.

## *It's a Knockout success for Seion Youth Group*



Seion Youth Group recently swept the board at a family Fun Day arranged by local Church Groups at Llantisant Leisure Centre.

First prizes were gained by Esther Davies, knitting, Charlene Turner, needlework, Evan John, cookery and Owen John in the photography.

The 10 man Knockout team gained a third place out of the 16 teams entered. A great achievement. Well done to you all

The Seion Superstars Supporters Group were highly recommended and everyone enjoyed a happy day making full use of the pool and other facilities available at the Centre

## *Summary of the Audit Report*

Last Spring the Communities First Partnership commissioned the University of Glamorgan (School of Humanities and Social Sciences) to undertake a Community Audit of the Ward. The purpose was to enable the Community, as a whole, to define its most important needs. The Audit used several methods to gain your views: a survey using a questionnaire that was delivered to every door in Maerdy, Focus Groups, Visioning Event and Critical Person Interviews. Using these methods the Audit team were able to cross reference findings and identify the really serious points of concern.



In brief (which is difficult) you (The People of Maerdy) identified two clear priorities for The Communities First Partnership:

- You want to see improved facilities for young people.
- You are concerned about drug and alcohol misuse and would like to see support systems in place.

The Audit also points to the need for action on the Jobs and Business front and recommends the setting up of schemes that support people

back into work, while paying them a real wage rather than just a benefits top-up.

You are very appreciative of your local Community School but have a poor view of adult education opportunities.

You are very concerned about the poor state of the immediate environment and want to see the reinstatement of areas of dereliction. In particular you want action on Edward Street, Maerdy Hall and the old Maerdy Hotel site. You are concerned about litter, dogs fouling, vandalism, car speeding, off-road vehicles and Fly tipping.

36% of you report that you suffer from “limiting long-term illness”, compared to 27% in RCT as a whole and 18% in England confirming that there is an urgent need to develop a Health Action plan for the Ward.

The Audit confirms that crime levels are really very low and for the most part you feel fairly safe in your community. There is concern about young people congregating and perhaps causing a nuisance.

Though you often tell us that the “community is not what it was” the audit proves that you are actually still a very active community.

### **Coming Soon!**

The full text of the Audit Report is now available and may be read at Maerdy Library.

Maerdy Communities First would like to thank all of you who participated and especially those of you volunteered to help the Audit Team.

## Together we CAN make a difference

Communities First came to Maerdy early in 2002 when a Steering Group were elected at an open meeting to set the process in motion. You may ask what difference it has made? The early days were taken getting the full-time coordinators appointed and the office established in Teify House. Although some of the Focus Groups had been set up prior to these appointments some



**Kristen, Debra and Ros in the Community First Office at Teify House**

form of coordination was established between the Groups and new groups set up. This newsletter started and we held the Open day at the Community School. This year saw the start of the Kidz-R-Us play-schemes when workshops were arranged for the young people during school holidays.

On a more serious note, a team from the University of Glamorgan conducted a Social Audit. From that audit report the Partnership, along with the Focus Groups, held several meetings where the issues arising from the Audit were discussed. After much discussion and consultation with interested parties, these issues were prioritised and a **Forward Plan for Maerdy through to 2007** has been devised.

This Forward Plan is very detailed and looks to improve life in Maerdy for all. It includes initiatives and projects to:

- The reinstatement of Edward Street
- The demolition of Maerdy Hall
- Improve the access/egress of Seion Chapel
- A community woodland project (Cydcoed)
- Improve the old Maerdy Hotel site
- Develop the old Maerdy Colliery site
- Set up a young peoples sexual health clinic
- Satellite drugs support and information service
- Improvements to health care services
- Investigate ways to improve the employment prospects of the residents
- Improve the volunteer base by providing training and support for volunteers
- Develop community events/cultural celebrations
- Further develop and improve communications
- Develop more youth projects
- New under preschool initiatives

This is only a broad outline of the Plan and the work that has to be done up to 2007. The Partnership needs your help to bring these schemes/projects to fruition. If you feel you could lend a hand with one or more of these projects you would be more than welcome to join us. All you have to do is contact the Community First Office on 01443 755687 and speak to one of the staff.

The Partnership will be charged with 'putting the meat on the bones' of these projects/initiatives and will have to work hard to get the funding necessary to complete this programme. Don't expect to see massive changes overnight. Over the next few years you certainly should see these projects progressing and see the benefits of living in a Communities First Area.

### *The Road To Nowhere - update*

We will be renewing our efforts in the New Year to get the debate on the road reopened. We feel that a coordinated effort between Tylorstown, Ferndale and Maerdy is required to get the road extended all the way up the valley and we shall be pursuing how best to do this.

Thank you all for the support we have received on this matter – both written and verbal – and for your offers of taking direct action to get our rights

## *A couple of years into the Communities First Programme in Maerdy and where are we? (The thoughts of Peter Thomas)*

The partnership board is made of three sectors consisting of 1/3 rd from the Voluntary sector 1/3 from the Business sector and 1/3 residential representation, a principle founded in the initial bid for the communities first scheme.

The foundations on which Communities First are



**Peter Thomas, Partnership Member representing the youth of Maerdy**

founded are documented in the pamphlet entitled 'Communities First' available at the Communities First partnership base at Teify House, where also you will be able to find your Communities First co-ordinator and youth co-ordinator operating in an open office.

The overall aims of the Communities First programme is regeneration of Maerdy, however different people have different interpretations of what 'regeneration' means.

Some believe that regeneration is an opportunity to establish key foundations within the community to enhance its future as a non deprived, but flourishing community, where distinguished people see ideals being lived out and long for occupation within, others argue that regeneration is a phasal process and the importance of capacity building and feel good factors of individuals to raise the well-being of the most insecure in our ward is the real aim, regardless of the whole community and its status.

As Maerdy residents we should be aware that the Communities First programme is an experimental project and the residents of which Communities First aims to serve are the guinea pigs.

Therefore there is no correct interpretation of what regeneration means in relation to the Communities First programme as it is new to everyone involved, I believe in the former

meaning and as a resident, like all residents who receive this newsletter I am entitled to express this view, however most of you are not expressing any views and are therefore running the risk of forced agendas being placed upon our community, the only way to correct this is to become active, write a piece for the this newsletter, attend meetings or even discuss this article with the person you sit next to in the doctors surgery.

Who stands to gain the most from Communities First?

Many see Communities First as a pot of money to reap from and as residents we must keep this in mind, but to succeed for Maerdy we must consider as John. F. Kennedy would have said "ask not what Communities First can do for you but what you can do for Communities First" for regeneration to work none of us should be thinking about the self but the whole. Not

where we want to be but where we want Maerdy to be in the future.

I do not believe that the regeneration of Maerdy should be for the here and now, but for future generations to come, as a partnership board member I am often told that not enough is being done to show that we are doing anything at all, and I often feel pressurised into supporting small projects just because 'we have to be seen as active within the community with social activities.'

I have my doubts as to the objectives and outcomes of many social exercises and am often left questioning the value of such events and activities, for example, the 'Christmas party' planned for this year is likely to cost between £2000 and £3000. Although I will lend my support to this event I continue to be troubled by its ultimate purpose and worth. In the past such an event would be of minimal costs with participants lending their support free of charge, just for the pleasure of taking part in a community event, such as the local Salvation Army band playing Christmas carols and a local resident also singing festive pieces whilst playing her guitar. Why not get back to that ethos and have a non denominational midnight mass at the Church with mulled wine and mince pies, whilst standing below a community Christmas tree, after all Christmas is a special social event and deserves

more than a summer fete with the ever present face painting, bouncy castle and circus activities.

As in a previous newsletter I will end with a plea, to all residents, get involved in this project and question all members of the partnership including myself to find out what is going on, ultimately this programme will affect you, whatever you are told,

*Editors Comments*

*Thank you Peter for your letter that I publish unedited. I share some of your concerns but I feel that the regeneration of Maerdy must take place on many levels. It is important that the decisions taken today are sustainable in the long term but equally important is that a 'well being factor' is also catered for in the short term. The proposed Community Carol Service will, in my opinion, help form the foundations on which the long term regeneration may be based. The event being planned will feature the schools in Maerdy and, hopefully, the Churches and other organisation working within Maerdy. The money you mention will be needed to help create a community spirit within the area that all residents can enjoy – including a Christmas tree. This money has been allocated from the existing marketing budget and, if it is not spent during this financial year, will have to be returned to the Assembly.*

*In most issues of the Newsletter, I have tried to encourage residents to get involved with Communities First and help to broaden the debates as to the future of Maerdy. As a community, we will only get out of Communities First as much as we are prepared to put into it. I feel that short term feel good projects will help produce the interest within the community to enable the long term regeneration projects to be successful.*

*Let's have your views. DO you think that the short term 'feel good' initiatives are worth while or should we concentrate our time and effort solely on achieving the long term regeneration of Maerdy? Or is there room for both? Write to us at Teify House or e-mail us at [davechapmancf43@hotmail.com](mailto:davechapmancf43@hotmail.com). Ros Davis has arranged a Full Open Partnership Meeting to review progress on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> November at the Community Centre. @ 7pm. Why not come along and make your own mind up.*

## **Sporting Personalities - Debra Hanney, Youth Coordinator**

This month, our sporting profile is on the Communities First Youth Coordinator, Debra



Hanney. Although not from Maerdy, Debra has spent many hours over the last year or so working closely with the youth of Maerdy at the schools and youth clubs and has been instrumental in organizing the Kidz-R-Us projects which have been so successful during the school holidays.

Debra has been a student at Rhondda Kyokushin Karate Club for the past 16 years. She trains at least twice per week at Ystrad

there are vast amounts of money involved as to the programme for the betterment of Maerdy, isn't it wise then for the residential community to be in control? After all who knows better about a community than those who live in it?

**Peter Thomas**

Sports Centre on both a Monday and a Thursday between 8.00pm-9.30pm.

The "Kyokushin" style is renowned for its strict discipline, dojo etiquette and fighting styles including full knockdown, clicker and wuko. They also regularly practice kata, self-defence and weapons training such as Bo and Nunchukus.

Over the years she has represented both her club and country at local, national and international level. As a result she has traveled and met students from other countries such as at the European Championships in Kaunas (Lithuania) 1996, Berlin 1997, Oradea (Romania) 1998 and Belgium 1998 etc.

In 1997, after training for ten years she was finally successful in gaining her shodan black belt (1<sup>st</sup> Dan). As well as continuing to train for full knockdown competitions she also teaches students ranging in age from 6yrs to 60yrs and recently received her judges certificate for knock-down competitions.

Debra thinks that the training is great for building confidence and physical stamina whatever your age and above all she enjoys the social aspect of meeting new people when traveling to competitions all over the country.

If anyone is interested in finding out more about this style of karate or would like to train, you can phone Debra on 07786 523988. She will be pleased to give you more information

## *Community Notice Board*

### **All Saints Church**

#### **Special Services for Christmas**

**Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> December - Christmas Eve service starting at 9.30 pm**

**Christmas Morning Eucharist at 8.30 am**

**All more than Welcome**

*Maerdy Junior School* – will be holding their *Concert* at 1.30 on December 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> at the school. This year it will be Ali Baba and a nativity with a twist. All are welcome.

*Maerdy Community Centre* : Chaplins panto will be giving a performance of *Jack and the Beanstalk* on **Saturday January 3rd at 2:00pm**. Full details are available at the Centre

### **Seion Christmas Meetings**

#### **A warm invitation to Seion's Christmas Meetings**

**On Sunday 21<sup>ST</sup> December:**

**“Why and How should we Celebrate Christmas?”**

**@ 11am The Family Service**

**@5.30pm Carol Service** – with a light buffet afterwards

Then on **Christmas Day** we meet for a brief, informal service @ **10am** to let the children show us their presents and thank **God** for the greatest gift **HE** ever gave, **His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord**.

“And the Word was made flesh..and made His dwelling among us..and we saw His glory”  
John 1:14

**A Warm Welcome to any or all of the above meetings.**

Happy Christmas to everyone in Maerdy from all at Seion

**Maerdy Community Newsletter is published by the Communication Committee of Communities First—Maerdy, Teify House, Maerdy.**

Please contact the Communities First Office in Teify House if you wish to have a copy of the Newsletter in Welsh