

IN FOCUS The only inclusive activity festival in Essex has a pulse-racing 38th year



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HOW terrifying does being strapped by a bar, pulled back and let go to swing sound?

For some of the 370 young people and adults on site yesterday at the Mersea Island Festival, team swing was a new activity for them to try alongside the usual favourites like judo, archery, quad biking and circus skills.

Yesterday was the busiest day ever at the inclusive family-friendly festival for people with or without a physical or learning disability.

After their adrenaline-raising activities there was a camp concert, Mersea's own version of Britain's Got Talent, and the fun will continue until Monday.

Festival coordinator Phil Ager, on behalf of the Mersea Island Festival Trust, said: "Everyone here gets the chance to do things they otherwise wouldn't get the chance to so it challenges them and gives an opportunity to try activities they didn't know they could do.

"The feedback we get is they can be themselves and there are no pre-conceptions when they come here and what they can or can't do.

"There's nowhere else like it and people come year-on-year because of it."

So far, 300 people have stayed onsite, travelling from Essex and Suffolk, Newbury, Oxford and as far as Manchester. For the rest of the week they can look forward to daily discos... and being rescued by a Newfoundland Dog.

War - Terry Fleet learns the art of judo from Henry Spooner



Back to basics - Dominic Cirne, Vincent Leieu and Christopher Routledge take part in bush craft for if they are ever stuck in the wild



Talented - music gives an opportunity for confidence building and keeps participants entertained



Wacky - Robert Goh is dressed for the circus



Acrobats - Cory T with Billy Matthews doing circus skills



Art attack - Donna Wyatt's hidden hands show her painting skills



Thrill - Bernadette Ward and Tracey Grant caving with Connor Bowring



Combat - Thomas Harper (right) has aced judo practice