

Club News - South East

Mersea Island Festival 2018

The circus came to town (almost) for the 38th Mersea Island Festival, the annual summer camp for those with and without a disability that takes place on the coast of Essex during the last week August. Inspired by the film about P T Barnum, this year's Festival took circus as its theme with our villages including the Circus Strongmen and Flying Acrobats; lots of ringmasters, elephants, acrobats and lions at our fancy dress nights; and even a fire eater and aerial artist at our last night parties. 380 campers, a team of over 70 volunteers and another 240 day visitors all took part in a packed programme of inclusive activities and entertainment.



Team Swing



Archery

On site during the day there was a new Team Swing, where participants were strapped to a beam and pulled back up to 30 feet in the air before swinging back down. The looks of anticipation, nervousness, excitement, terror! and then laughter were a picture. (And we had plenty!). Back on the ground there was an adventure course, archery, boat rides off the beach, fishing, a big art tent, circus skills, crabbing, pitch and putt, football, band workshop, signing to music, quad bikes, aerobics, zorbing, swimming, trampolining, judo and bushcraft workshops. You could find out how to be a proper fool in the Clowning Workshop or laugh yourself relaxed in the Laughter Yoga Workshop. We had adapted bikes to help people get round the site or there was the opportunity to have a ride on a horse and carriage.



Fishing

Club News - South East

Mersea Island Festival 2018 - continued

Essex Youth Service joined us on Tuesday afternoon and ran a successful Rounders tournament before helping people get ready for the Rainbow Party that evening. Wednesday it was all the fun of the fair when we set up stalls such as Hook the Duck, Ring the Bell and the Stocks. Thursday afternoon was our Golden Boot Football Tournament. Once the day was done the fun kept on going in the evening with a live band or disco most nights. The Camp Concert is a certainty at the Festival. On two nights our Festival goers didn't let us down with a packed evening of singing, music, jokes and poetry in our answer to Britain's Got Talent. And at the weekend we did it all over again (despite gale force winds and rain on Sunday. The end of summer!)



The Stocks



Band Workshop

At the end of each camp we ask people what their best thing about Festival was.

"The amazing people that organised this event and the volunteers and the love and affection everyone has for all the people with support needs. We also loved that no matter what ability everyone could have a go at everything :) AMAZING"

"Seeing old friends and making new ones."

"The amount of inclusion – that anyone can do the activities"

"I wouldn't usually be able to do things like the zipwire and it's lovely to experience this."

"Relaxed friendly environment with lots to do, no matter what the weather"

"Feeling free to be me."

Our thanks once again go to all the Festival volunteers who helped run the Festival, the various organisations that came and ran an activity free of charge – and the generous sponsors and donators that helped fund the Festival this year. We're already looking at the 2019 Festival which will be from the 18th to 26th August.

To see a short video about the Festival and hear more from our campers – or for more information - visit the website: www.merseafestival.org.uk , email info@merseafestival.org.uk or call 01206 383226.

Phil Ager – Festival Coordinator