



Microsoft Research Limited Fund

A fund established by Microsoft Research Limited, managed by Cambridgeshire Community Foundation, offering grants to local charities and community groups.



MRL Fund Update

The MRL Fund panel has already met twice in 2011 with a further meeting planned in October. Since it was set up in 2007 grants totalling £46,000 have been awarded to local community groups and charities in Cambridgeshire.

Grants awarded at the last panel meeting are described in this newsletter, together with feedback from previously funded projects.

Grant criteria

Offering grants to charitable projects that meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. Enrich lives of disadvantaged local people through provision of cultural/educational events or experiences.
2. Improve the local green environment through small scale projects.
3. Provide support or training to improve the employability of those facing disadvantage.

Recent Grants made to Benefit Local Groups

Branching Out were awarded £280 to purchase 4 digital cameras. Branching Out is a social enterprise providing work experience and training to adults with learning disabilities. Many of the service users cannot read and a photographic record of their achievements will give them a sense of ownership and record of their work.

Cambridge Student Community Action were awarded £396 to provide volunteers to support children who do not speak English as their first language. The 80 volunteers working on this project spend at least an hour a week with the children on a one to one basis, either at the child's home or school.

Illuminate Community Group were awarded £865 to provide personal development and life coaching sessions for people who are unemployed or on low incomes, or people who have suffered a significant life changing event that has had a detrimental impact on the quality of their life e.g. mental health issues, disabilities, crime or abuse.

Rowan Humberstone were awarded £900 towards activities taking place as part of the Big Draw event in October 2011. Working with Cambridge University, over 5 days

Rowan will attend a different museum each day and lead participatory art workshops with some Rowan students (people with learning disabilities), members of the public, families & children, using artefacts, the buildings and people as inspiration.

STARS Cambridgeshire Children's Bereavement Support Service was awarded £900 to develop their database. Having moved from a paper based system to a database, they now want to develop the database allowing staff to monitor the level of support given and progress made by each client. It will also help them cope with a growing workload.

The Wildlife Trust Cambridge and Peterborough was awarded £900 to purchase 8 pairs of steel toe-capped waders for a group of young people who are creating a board walk around Norwood Road Nature Reserve in March. The project involves young people who are in danger of becoming young offenders, involving them in positive activities within the community. The project has generated positive responses from members of the public who have spoken to the young people and been impressed by the quality of their work.

Feedback from Funded Projects

Cam Sight received £400 in June 2010 towards assistive technology training. The Assistive Technology Trainer, offers assessment, advice and training in a range of technologies for visually impaired people, such as the kReader Mobile. This training provides visually impaired people with skills that contribute to greater independence, easier communication and access to education and employment.

Feedback from the project highlights how a 21 year old man who suffered sudden dramatic sight loss in early 2009 benefited. When he came for his first assistive technology session he was very concerned that he would not be able to use any of the day to day items of technology that he had become accustomed to. Cam Sight were able to offer support as he came to terms with the fact that he would never have vision and as part of this support provided training in the use of computers and the internet with special screen reading software.

Peterborough and District Talking Newspaper Association received £750 in February 2010 to purchase a laptop and screen reading software. The local Talking Newspaper Association, besides producing a weekly news recording, also provides a monthly magazine containing information relevant to visually impaired people both nationally and locally. The recordings were, for many years, made on cassette tape, but as this method has really become outmoded, the system was switched to a computerised digital method in the autumn of last year.

The magazine tape is actually produced by a visually impaired member, and in order for this to become fully digital, it meant providing him with a recording system which was based on all screen information being available in an audible way. The development of the software is now in full operation, which means that the producer of the magazine can play his full part in its production and that all our listeners can have the advantage of a much clearer digital recording.

Cambridge Joint Playschemes received £900 in October 2009 towards activities and outings during the Easter Playscheme. Fifty three children with varying disabilities took part in the 8 week scheme. As well as benefitting the children, parents are also glad of the scheme

- “Playschemes are magnificent—a lifesaver—my bit of respite.”
- Fantastic resource—respite for the family and can leave the child without worrying.”
- “Keep up the good work—ideas and energy are inspiring and the play workers always well prepared, caring and considerate.”
- “It’s nice not to worry about a child for a few hours.”
- “My child came home animated and she loved every minute.”



Get Involved

You can get involved in a number of ways:

1. Are there local community groups you know that would benefit from an MRL fund grant or any of the other funds that CCF manages?
2. Fund raise for the MRL Fund.
3. Think about volunteering for MRL fund projects. Find out more from the MRL fund panel.

The Cambridgeshire Community Foundation, an independent charity (1103314), makes grants to local grass root community groups. Individuals, families, business, public sector organisations, and other charitable trusts make this possible by setting up Funds with us.

Our purpose is to provide a grant making and fund management service to our donors, while supporting projects that make a real difference to the quality of life for local people. Since set up in early 2004 the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation, working in partnership with local and national businesses, charitable trusts, local government and individuals, has distributed over £4m to over 1000 groups across Cambridgeshire.