



## Friends of Lethbridge Annual General Meeting 2021

### Chairs Report

**19<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

2021 has certainly been an interesting 4<sup>th</sup> year as FoL chair.

As the Treasurers report will detail, we have raised a total profit of **£6,812.30** during the *2020/2021 academic year*. This continues to be a reduced income, due to the impact Covid 19 has had on our fundraising efforts, however represents a slight increase on last year, where we were initially effected by the pandemic.

In a repeat of last year, like so many other charities we again missed out on several of our summer events. We were unable to hold our summer fete or the 'Lethbridge 10K'. These are two of our biggest established fundraisers. Once again, with the safety and community health at stake, I am proud that we made the decision to have put those considerations ahead of raising money.

Fortunately, due to the format of our newest event, The Hydra Ride was able to go ahead, to which we had a great turnout and was able improve on the profits from 2019.

The Christmas Bazaar was another victim of the social distancing requirements while we all observed the winter lockdowns. The school cohort were still extremely supportive of the annual hampers raffle, which included a small selection of other prizes from local businesses. This year we took the decision to purchase vouchers from local businesses that have so willingly supported us in the past, as a gesture of our gratitude whilst they continued to suffer through the nationwide restrictions. Although Christmas Bazaar was a loss to our fundraising efforts and a shame for the children to have missed out on the fun of the season, I'm sure we will be able to come back with a bang when conditions allow.

With the commitment of our members of the team, we were still able to arrange some of the regular annual events though, such as the Christmas cards. Thank you to the organisation of Martene Davidson, the teachers who enable the arts and crafts to take place in lesson time so far in advance of Christmas, and to the parents who purchased items from the supplier (APFS) raising commission for Friends of Lethbridge.

While our focus had to continue with a socially distanced approach, we tried a few events to keep the school cohort engaged. The first being a Sponsored 5K event, in which we challenged those who wanted to take part to complete 5 kilometres over the October half term. We had an enormous response and were very proud of those who took part, helping to be our biggest fundraiser of the academic year, with approx. £2,200 profit.

We also held two events over the Easter break. First was an online virtual balloon race. With zero outlay and donated prizes from local supermarkets, it was a good attempt at engaging Friends of Lethbridge supporters who may not have been able to engage with us in a more physical capacity.

The second Easter event was a trail around Old Town. Participants had from 3<sup>rd</sup> April till 11<sup>th</sup> April to find all the letters hung in windows around our area and discover the Easter themed phrase. The maps were sold via the online Sumup shop so we had zero contact with those that took part making it very covid compliant. There was some great feedback, especially that the format and route allowed people to do the trail at their leisure, as well as highlighting the many local play parks which helped to keep the kids engaged.

Although we were unable to hold another of our regular, non fundraising events, the Mothers Day wrap, I am looking forward being able to bring this back in the coming year if the restrictions allow.

The preloved uniform continues to be a monster of a task to control, especially with the mountains of generous donations we receive, with minimal chance over the last year to sell it. Two of our new members have agreed to rise to the challenge and we will be starting an online shop in the near future, to supplement the termly in-person sales we hope can be reinstated this year.

Our ongoing fundraiser was crisp packet recycling. Terracycle crisp packet collections, has also shown itself to be an easier money earner with little effort, as well as showing the kids that not all rubbish needs to go to land fill. Thank you to Clare Bugg for being our Terracycle organiser. In the coming year, The Eco Council will be getting involved in the organising of this, possibly moving to regular planned donation days to take the pressure off the office who have struggled with many of the local community wanting to drop off their donations throughout the school day.

With the introduction of Amazon Smile, we have been able to raise a small amount of money with absolutely no effort. We will try to maximise this revenue as well in the coming year through our parent cohort.

We are still a relatively small number of volunteers representing a large parent cohort for Lethbridge and we continue do an amazing job staying enthusiastic and dedicated to our events. With the departure of some long-term volunteers as their kids move to secondary school, I am very happy to welcome some new volunteers to our charity.

A huge thank you to all team, especially Jo Innes, our secretary always making sure I'm not taking too much on, and Laura Burgoyne, our hard-working treasurer & our hamper coordinator!

Other thanks include:

All the staff in the school office who have to deal with the mountains of requests and work we end up creating them to support our events – Thank you Pete Hellier, Jackie Messenger, Tracey Owen & Elaine Eggleton.

Our teacher contact – Karen Kidd

Kevin Lee, the school caretaker who helps facilitate requirement for our events.

All the teachers, TAs and other support staff who help provide/distribute and create fund raising items.

The senior leadership team, Mrs Mayes, Mrs Short, Mrs Harmer and Mrs Millen who allow us to operate the Friends group within the school and support us at every event (there are many schools who do not have such a supportive SLT!)

Last but not least the adults and children who donate their money, making all of it worthwhile.

Last year the focus of funding was to be the forest school area, however with another disruptive academic year, we have only been able to fund a few items for the school this year:

- The Aardman workshops,
- Sun shelters/gazebos which will be used in the coming year
- Year 6 Leavers Book

This year will bring renewed focus of the development of the forest schools area, which is an under-utilised resource to the school.

To support this, I think external grants and funding are going to be greatly needed to help ensure we can maximise our contributions to the school. If you would like to support with these applications, or know of any we could apply for, please let me know.

And finally, the past 18 months have been challenging for everyone, it is incredibly time-consuming, often stressful and it doesn't pay a wage but organising events for FoL is always rewarding.

Seeing what a difference the items we have funded makes to the school over the year, brings a kind of satisfaction that can only come from knowing you have made a difference to many children. For these reasons, I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to our amazing committee and I would strongly encourage new parents to come along and see what we do.

Here's to the new academic year.

Ria Walega – Chair