



**The AGM for the MCS Friends Association (PTA) was held on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> October at The Monmouth Priory. We were very pleased to welcome some new members. Thank you to all those who attended or who expressed an interest in the Friends Association. The Chair gave this report about the Friends activities during the last academic year.**

#### **Chairs Report - October 2021 – October 2022**

It has been another unusual year for the Friends. Without the facility to hold events and meet parents face-to-face we have been unable to recruit new members and our group has become considerably smaller as a result. We had hoped to hold an event in the summer term but with Covid regulations constantly shifting this was still not possible. As well as existing to raise extra funds for the school, MCS Friends are a chance for parents to meet socially and I, for one, have really missed this side of the group. However, we are obviously not alone in this and like everyone else we are trying to return to some sort of normal. I am very hopeful that we may be able to do something soon. There have been several requests for a curry and quiz night so I suggest we put that at the top of the agenda for the next meeting and get organising!

Although we were not able to hold the festival style weekend event that been talked about, school did manage to hold a Summer Showcase. The Friends were invited to provide the refreshments and to use it as a chance to meet some new parents. The showcase was a big success, and it was so lovely to be back in school and to hear students perform. Unfortunately, our bar was not such a success, and we were left with quite a lot of stock. However, the PEA Faculty kindly stepped in and bought all the soft drinks off us at cost price ready for the school's performances of Grease. Most of the alcohol is still being stored at school and will help stock the bar at our next event. The soft drinks and popcorn that we sold on the night meant that we broke even so all was not lost.

On a more positive note, we have managed to raise a significant amount of money for the school again this year. Our paperless Christmas raffle raised £2,815 which is great. We stuck to the same format as the previous year with an iPad as the first prize, a Christmas hamper as second and drinks hamper as the third prize. I would like to thank Sally Chilton for creating a beautiful Christmas hamper and to Becky Stoddard for putting together a fabulous drinks hamper and rallying donations from all her friends. Both hampers were great quality and will have really helped boost sales.

In the Spring we experimented with another form of raffle which we could offer to the wider community. It was held via the online site Raffl and we had three fabulous prizes including a hot tub, an overnight stay and dinner for two at The Tudor Farmhouse, kindly donated by one of our members Hari Fell, and a giant grazing tray donated by Tasty Treats. We set the number of tickets at 1,000 and the idea was to draw it when they were all sold. Unfortunately, tickets didn't sell as quickly as we hoped, and we decided to put an end date of 19 July. We did, however, make £1,301 profit and it was definitely worth trying out.

In February this year I was contacted by a grandparent from within our school community to let me know that she was donating £2,000 to MCS Friends. This is not the first time she has given, and we are extremely grateful. The next time she came to Monmouth, Mr Hutchison arranged for her to visit the school, where he gave her a tour of the building and showed her the canopies that she helped raise funds for with her previous donation, apparently she was very pleased.

We also continue to raise a steady sum through Easy Fundraising and second-hand uniform.

Easy fundraising is a mechanism for charities to raise funds from online shopping. The system is free and members of the public register for an account and pick a charity to support. Since we started using Easy Fundraising (15 years ago) we have raised £4,851.24 and we have 228 supporters registered. However, only a very small number of these supporters are actively generating funds. In the academic year 2021/2022 we raised £629.75 via 19 active supporters; and so far, this academic year we have already raised £118.38 via 18 supporters. Leanne Wakerley has been working hard to publicise the app, getting people to sign up and reminding them to activate their donation on the easy fundraising app or website. Thanks to her hard work, it continues to bring in a steady amount each quarter and we are hopeful that we can keep recruiting more shoppers!

Our second-hand uniform 'blue pods' are back out in the school reception and Sally Chilton has been busy, collecting donations from school, sorting through it all and making sure everything that goes to Bridges Community Shop on the high street is good quality, clean and ready to be sold. Last financial year we raised a fantastic £770.73 and between March and September this year we raised £791.23. The link with the Bridges shop is working well, profits are split equally between us, and it is great to know that both charities are benefitting from this relationship. We are also grateful to everyone who has donated their old uniform so that we can offer this service to those who need it without them having to ask. Thank you, we really appreciate your generosity.

Over the past year I have had several positive meetings with Mr Hutchison regarding MCS Friends and what we can fund. There are plans to expand the library, to double and then triple its current size with help needed to fund both the books and the shelves to house them. He is also in talks with the Art Department regarding frames and cabinets to enable student work to be exhibited more freely around the school. We are looking forward to helping fund both these projects as soon as some decisions have been made. We have also been talking to Mr Hutchison about recruiting a staff representative to the Friends Association to help with communication with staff.

Finally, you may have noticed, if you have been round the back of the school, the three new outdoor tennis tables that we bought for the school last term. I have heard from students and staff that these are a great success with some spirited games happening at break times. As we predicted balls are frequently flying off and I wonder if we might need to offer to buy some more soon!

So it just leaves me to say a big thank you to everyone who has helped us over the last year: to the school admin, finance, and senior leadership team who are always quick to help when we ask; to the governors and whole school community for your unwavering support; to the selfless generosity of the committee members who all give your precious time and skills for free; and finally to those of you who jump in and help whenever we call upon you. We may be a small group, but we pack a mighty punch.

**The next meeting of the Friends Association will be held on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> November at 7.30pm at the Estero Lounge in Monmouth. We will be discussing the Christmas Raffle, our next social event, fundraising ideas for the rest of the year, different ways to communicate the work of the Friends to the school community and receiving updates on our ongoing fundraising activities. There will also be an opportunity to meet other parents over a drink. All parents and carers are welcome.**

**If you would like more information, would like to be added to our contact list to be kept informed about our activities and opportunities to get involved or to let us know to expect you at the meeting please contact us via email on [moncompfriends@gmail.com](mailto:moncompfriends@gmail.com). Of course, you are also more than welcome to just turn up on the night.**

**MCS Friends Association**