

CEO: Stephanie Smith

Dear everyone,

Lots of good news and positive stories in this newsletter. Everyone at Raystede, Peaceways, Lewes, Uckfield and Hailsham has achieved so much during the past few months – a big thank to you all for everything you have done. Every day, I see how hard you all work for the animals in our care, you really do go the extra mile!

i360 Challenge

You may be aware that I am preparing to jump off the i360 – see Page 13 for details - I've never done anything like this before and I'm most pleased with the sponsorship donations. Now I just have to do it!

25 years in the Kennels!

I would like to highlight that in April, our Kennels Manager, Val Suleski will mark 25 years of service to Raystede. Although Val has never liked the spotlight, it is important to recognise 25 years of her wonderful work at Raystede. Val estimates that she has seen at least 8,000 dogs through Raystede in that time and says that she can remember all the dogs and very few of the owners. I am sure that all those dogs would like to send a big thank you to Val for the past 25 years' devoted service to Raystede.

I hope this informal newsletter helps us all to keep in touch. Please look after yourselves, your family and friends. Thank you again to all staff and volunteers for your dedication and commitment to Raystede.

Stephanie Smith

CEO

In this issue

- **Stephanie goes out of her comfort zone!**
- **Congratulations to Lucy - a proud new mum**
- **Record rehoming numbers**
- **Congratulations to Val on 25 years at Raystede!**
- **Sad farewells to Maureen (African Grey) and Whizz (pony)**
- **Happy retirement to Lesley**



Animal Welfare: Matt Gough

The start of the year really has been a bit of whirlwind, but in a very good way!

It was fantastic to see internal promotion in animal care with Megan Shortiss being promoted to Cattery Manager and Miriam Dowding to Operations Manager, both on secondment. Seeing such progression at Raystede really shows the benefit of investing in our teams, and that as an organisation we can provide opportunities for building new skills.



There has also been success in the work of our animal care teams. The Cattery Team achieved their highest rehoming figures for over four years in January, and at time of writing the Kennels Team have managed to rehome a third more dogs compared to this time last year. The Aviaries Team have continued to evolve the care they provide to our birds with great success from the specialist vet visits that the team arranged; CFS have continued to rehome a fantastic number of small animals, and Equine have done brilliantly to find homes for three of their herd over the last year – that is a huge achievement during a cost-of-living crisis given how expensive keeping an equine can be.

Project Terrapin has continued to progress and the area should be open again by the Easter holidays. We will have to wait a little while longer until we can add terrapins into the facility as we wait for our licence to be processed, but using the project to the full is finally in sight.

There will be a more detailed communication sent out about the final stages of Project Terrapin creation as we progress towards an opening date.



Snuggling Degus - finally rehomed!

Rehoming: Miriam Dowding

We are still busy with surrender requests, although these have slowed a little since the end of 2023.

We have been very busy with fostering, both with people wanting to join Break Away and new people applying to become foster carers. We currently have 12 animals on Break Away, with another three rabbits who have just joined, this is the busiest the scheme has been in years.

We've taken on a new volunteer to assist with the many home visits we are doing, which is a great help, thank you to Richard for helping out with these.

By the time this goes out, the staffing in Rehoming will have changed somewhat. Meg has started her secondment as the Cattery Manager, and I am a few weeks into the Operations Manager role. We have a new Rehoming Manager, Amelia, starting at the beginning of April, and are in the process of recruiting a new Rehoming Assistant.

Thank you to Ellie and Charlotte for managing the day-to-day running of Rehoming.

Surgery: Sam Coe

It has been an interesting and varied time in the Surgery recently. We have been kept busy with dogs, cats, birds, rabbits and even a terrapin!

The Cattery Team kept us busy at the beginning of the year with an outbreak of diarrhoea which affected several cats. This meant that strict hygiene protocols and barrier nursing was required for several weeks. Thankfully, due to the hard work and diligence of the Cattery Team the cats recovered, and they have now found new homes.

As a vet I really enjoy going into the Aviaries; it is the only place I have ever worked where my patients say "hello" to me! The birds are real characters and I have had a chance to meet some of them during my visits. Boysie the Great Lored Amazon has recently been diagnosed with Aspergillosis and is receiving regular visits for supportive care and treatment. He is a lovely intelligent boy and all of us in the Surgery wish him a speedy recovery.

We have seen quite a few underweight dogs recently. One of these is Loki who is a real character. He came in to Raystede in very poor condition and was so thin that initially we believed he may be unwell. However, with an appropriate diet and care he has thrived here. He is now a bouncy, cheerful character looking for a new home.



Loki



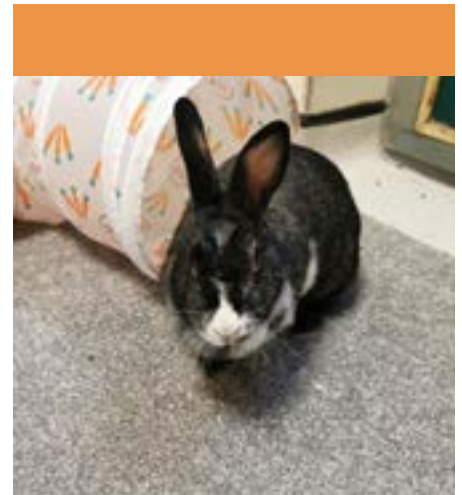
Bumble & Bee

Small Animals: Vickie Gorst

Whilst the Smalls Team has had a slow winter in terms of adoptions, it doesn't mean that we don't have some happy endings!

Our group of four degus have finally been adopted! All of the female degus had come in separately and as a social species (and not often sought after) we decided to bond them together to create a small colony. Abby-goo was our longest stay degu, arriving in January 2023. Their adopter is an experienced degu owner and a veterinary nurse, so we are confident that they are in the best possible home.

While adoptions are slow, intake is still busy with urgent or welfare cases happening frequently. Eclipse is an older single female rabbit who came to us unexpectedly as her owner was struggling to properly house and clean out her nine rabbits. Eclipse requires dental work along with spaying and we are working with the owner to help more of her rabbits and get them to a manageable number.



Eclipse

For those of you who remember the "mouse-gate" saga of 2021, we sadly had a trio of Raystede-born mice returned to us due to loss of interest. Unfortunately, one had several tumours and was euthanised shortly after arriving but the other two are still going strong at over two years old. As a huge mouse lover, I decided to adopt them myself! I look forward to giving them the best retirement home.

We've been busy playing musical chairs with our six cockerels (yes, six!!) to find where they fit best in the various flocks and areas in the Sanctuary after a series of fall outs and gender changing hens. All is now peaceful in the Sanctuary, except for the daily crowing matches. As I type, our handsome Frankie is due to go to his new home shortly.



Happy & Sleepy

The tortoises are slowly waking up from their annual hibernation. Everyone has made it through another year and Sheldon is back to making his presence known by charging around and making a mess.

When the weather improves a little more, they will be able to start venturing outside regularly again. As the winters are becoming mild and unpredictable, it can be difficult to maintain safe hibernation temperatures in our current tortoise sheds, so we are currently researching the fridge hibernation method for future years.



Frankie

Aviaries: Sarah Gorringe



Boysie

Destiny went on her sabbatical after what seemed to be years of dreaming, saving and planning. She is now back and we had to say goodbye to Oscar who had brilliantly stepped in to cover her role so positively. She has wonderful memories and no doubt will be thinking about a new animal-related adventure.

Having a specialist avian vet visiting our birds has been helpful and we keep her busy for the four hours she is on site. It's stressful, as it's all hands on deck with a lot of activity. Any birds we have concerns about are flagged up and prioritised. With her expertise the vet can quickly work towards finding out what is going on, giving the patient a fighting chance of recovery. Birds are prey animals and will often hide illness until it's very serious.

Some of the African Grey parrot hens have had hormone implants to try to reduce feather plucking and nesting behaviour. Any health issues are addressed and blood tests, swabs, x-rays are taken on site where needed, to ascertain what's potentially going on inside their very complex little bodies.

A new patient, Boysie, our 34 year old, much loved Red lored Amazon, had not been himself, although subtle changes in his behaviour were seen, signs of being less active and not taking care of himself as he normally did, were flagged up so he could be examined more closely. After numerous tests it was agreed that he could have a CT scan to give a definite diagnosis. This was costly but we obtained a massive amount of information. Sadly, as we speculated, he is very poorly and we are treating him for a fungal infection called Aspergillosis, coupled with a bacterial infection. He has some liver damage, which may be related and, to be honest, a long tense road ahead for recovery. The medication will fight the two infections, sub cut fluids help with dehydration, nebulising helps breathing and with a disinfecting agent also fights the fungal infection. Aspergillum is present in the atmosphere but can sometimes become a problem if a bird has other health issues and the immune system is low.

Sadly, out of the blue recently we lost our sweet Maureen, a plucked African Grey. She died suddenly and a post mortem revealed nothing. In fact even though she was tatty on the outside, she had appeared otherwise physically healthy. It's very hard when this happens and there are no answers. We believe she went quickly as she had been fine, she had eaten her breakfast, but something was obviously wrong and we checked every possible angle. Flo is missing her friend and although she has Freya, whom she knows well, it's not the same.

We placed Dillon, a Timneh Grey, who had sustained lower beak damage, with Rosie, an African Grey, who was on her own and in need of companionship. Dillon could not be placed back in her group of Greys as it was possible the beak damage was through an altercation with one of them. Both being hens, we were not sure if it would be a good mix but over time, they have become friends, being similar characters. Out of curiosity, Rosie will follow Dillon outside which is good as she gets fresh air and stimulation, they also chew boxes together, which is great fun.



Dillon & Rosie

Equine: Alice Champion



Whizz

Our lovely Whizz had colic in early March and unfortunately his gut twisted. There is no cure for this and, sadly, alongside the vet and Whizz's loaners, we had to put him to sleep and end his suffering.

Whizz had been with his new forever family on our Loan to Rehome Scheme for a short six months, but we know he will never forget that short time as plenty of memories were made and he had many adventures with his new family and companion Charlie.

We are so glad Whizz got the opportunity to be part of a family again before he reached his time, and we know all our Raystede residents who are no longer with us would have been waiting for him at the end of the rainbow bridge.

A big thank you to the Fundraising Team for our new alpaca Pod, the alpacas have been enjoying having a shelter of their own where they can eat out of the rain and it will provide them with shade in the summer too!



Alpacas in their new pod



Buddy having a snooze

Our cheeky Buddy is officially reserved and will be off to his new home in the spring.

We will miss him so much.

As you all know he is a large character amongst our herd but we are so glad he will have a family of his own and another young Shetland to play with!

Cattery: Maisie Byrne



Peach & Pom pom

All things kittens are starting to ease off in the Cattery (famous last words), and we're pleased to report that all of the kittens and mums that we treated for the clostridium infection have found their forever homes. We haven't heard from everybody just yet, but from those who have sent in an update, everything has been going well and, even better, no more barrier nursing! I'm sure most of you saw us in our flattering white suits, but if you missed out, please see below!

Our current total for kittens stands at three, with our "Baby Fruits" Peach, Plum and Pomegranate (Pom Pom). Sadly, they were all abandoned and found in different areas close to Raystede. Peach and Pom Pom were found within 10 minutes of each other, and Plum was handed into a vet. When it became apparent that Plum was likely a sibling of the two little ones already in our care, we were able to work with the vets and get them reunited. After spending some time in foster care, they are ready to look for their forever homes.

We have seen some success recently on the Animals@Home scheme with another four cats being rehomed; Ezio, Leo, Marley and Audrey all found their forever homes. These cats were homed in quick succession and were all on site around the same time to meet their prospective adopters. After rehoming these cats things are quieter on our end of Animals@Home, but we are always keeping a look out for appropriate surrender requests and hope to be able to offer the scheme to some more cats very soon.

Happily, we've also been able to rehome our longest stay, Tiny, as well as our older pair Demi and Richie, who were in our care for 10 months and eight months, respectively. We've received updates from their adopters and some photos, and we're very pleased to say that they have all settled really well.

In terms of current long stays, we're doing really well with just the Baby Fruit kittens being our longest stays, but this is to be expected due to their very young age on arrival. We're confident that we will find homes for them in no time at all. At the time of writing, other than the Baby Fruits we have no cats in our care that have been with us longer than 30 days which is really positive.



Tiny - home at last

In staff related news, our lovely manager Amber will be leaving us at the end of March to start her maternity leave, we're very excited for her but we will miss her here in the Cattery. During this time, Meg will be stepping into the role of Cattery Manager and we're very happy to have her on our fabulous team.

We wish both Amber and Meg the best of luck.

Kennels: Holly Wilson



Doc

Kennels continues to receive large numbers of surrender requests, especially a high number for young dogs who require behavioural support, which ties in with recent report findings about the pandemic and post pandemic issues created by an increase in puppy purchasing. We currently have six youngsters whose support needs are high due to poor early experiences - Harley, Rufus, Rico, Pip, Squeak and Teddy. These dogs are unfortunately less attractive to adopters due to the input they need, and the team are spending significant time discussing them with potential adopters to try and secure homes. On the positive side they are all responding well and developing new skills now their needs are being met.

The dog warden kennels are still struggling with the number of 'stray' dogs. We are trying to help when we can, like with Doc, who was lucky to find a new home quickly. Unfortunately most 'strays' are Bull breed, like Peaches (who has been cleared as not being an XL Bully) or Shepherd and Lurcher types, all of which are harder to home.

Ruby continues to do well in foster care and recently featured in the Burgess (pet food) Greyhound and Lurcher Two-Week Takeover on social media. Stanley is being supported in his social media presence by terrier groups. There are lots of similar characters out there looking for homes. We're still hopeful and in the meantime, Stanley has been assisting with one of our nervous new arrivals, Lola, helping her settle in and feel safe so he is being a good team player!



Pip & Squeak



Peaches



Harley

HR & Volunteering: Heidi Christmas

Well, I can't believe that I've been at Raystede for over eight months now – time has really flown. I am really enjoying working here at this amazing site, with great staff and volunteers to look after the animals that are in our care. Thanks to you all for being so welcoming.

Heidi

We have had a number of development opportunities become available due to temporary arrangements/cover needed and we are really pleased that we've been able to offer these internally before advertising them externally.

We are committed to training and developing our staff in a variety of ways. Those who have been successful are:

- Megan Shortiss seconded into the Cattery Manager role
- Miriam Dowding seconded into the Operations Manager role



Heidi

We have also had four of our volunteers successfully appointed to staff roles at Raystede, which is really exciting. They have already shown their support for Raystede by volunteering and already know a lot about how we operate and what we are trying to achieve.

- Ian Goldsmith - Shop Assistant at Lewes – Lewes shop volunteer
- Sonja Antell - Cleaner - Cattery/Customer Services volunteer
- Karen Batchelor, Education Events Assistant - Welcome Team/Customer Services volunteer
- Louise Hobden, Fundraising Team Coordinator – Hailsham shop volunteer

We now have over 230 volunteers, which is amazing, and they have so many different skills and experiences. We are so fortunate that they want to help us.

Thank you to all of our First Aiders

Following the first aid courses in November last year and another in February this year we now have a total of 22 First Aiders across our sites. In our retail shops the Shop Managers and Assistant Shop Managers are all first aid trained. If anyone else would like to train to be a First Aider then please let us know.

In order to share this responsibility fairly amongst this team, to prevent any delays in responding and to enable our new First Aiders to gain experience, please follow these simple steps when ON SITE assistance is required:

- Please always use the radio to put a call out for a First Aider to respond
- Do not phone or contact a First Aider directly or request a First Aider by name
- Explain exactly where the first aid assistance is required

First Aiders have been trained to respond to every call out, by stating their name, that they are a First Aid responder and on their way. If more First Aiders are at the scene than required, they will be stood down accordingly.

Another big thank you to all of you for the time you have spent completing the various iHasco online training courses. Due to a great effort, we are now back on track with people just needing to complete courses as they expire.

Welcome and Goodbye

Welcome

Ian Goldsmith	Shop Assistant - Lewes
Carole Tonkin	Shop Assistant - Hailsham
Simon Bennett	Marketing, PR and Communications Manager
Jane Grutchfield	Online Assistant Manager
Emily King	Multi-Section Animal Care Assistant
Iryna Polishchuk	Finance Assistant
Jason Conrad	Finance Officer
Molly Dolding	Café Assistant
Fiona Howell	Café Assistant
Karen Batchelor	Education Events Assistant

Goodbye

Tricia Bannister	Shop Assistant - Lewes
Andrew Knight	Estates Assistant
Lynne Fowler	Shop Assistant/Driver
Lesley Pyle	Senior Accounts Assistant

If you know anyone who may be interested in working at Raystede, do point them in the direction of the careers page of our website.

Thank you



Employee Assistance Programme

Free phone: 0800 028 0199
24/7 confidential support

Online health portal: healthassuredeap.co.uk

Education: Emma Young

Family learning days

Our Family Learning Days continue to prove popular with visitors, even when the weather is terrible! During February half term we hosted 879 visitors who took part in a Valentine-themed 'key to my heart' trail. Families learned about what makes our animals happy, and about the differing shelter, lifestyle and companionship needs of the various species, as well as choosing their favourite animal to design a Valentine card for! The animal talks are a highlight of the Family Learning Days, with visitors enjoying the opportunity to see the animals up close and hear about their backgrounds and personalities. Thanks to the Equine Team, as well as the stars of the show (the goats and donkeys) for their support in offering these activities.

Later this year, we will be offering some topical trails and activities including an animal fact Easter egg hunt and a Summer Olympic challenge.



Duncan greeting some of his fans!

Education Garden

Our Education Garden is currently a mud pit! However it's necessary as the Estates Team are working very hard to install necessary pipes, cables and fencing for the new portacabin and for the Terrapin Project.

We look forward to settling into our new office and enabling the rabbits (who insisted on air conditioning being fitted before they moved in) to make use of the old one for extra bonding space.

Community

Community pet advice work slowed down a bit over the winter but is back up and running. The team are heading to Brighton and Eastbourne this Spring, to continue offering answers to pet-related questions about choosing, adopting and caring for them. Our Dog Behaviourist, Lyndsey, provides top tips and advice about all aspects of dog ownership, and our Vet Nurse, Maria, offers weight advice (for dogs rather than their owners) and free health-checks.

Strategy

Behind the scenes, Gemma is working on a 5-year Prevention and Education strategy which will see us targeting new audiences and spreading our animal welfare messages to a wider audience across Sussex. Thanks to all the staff members who took the time to visit one of her drop-in sessions, and who contributed a range of useful and interesting suggestions for our future direction.



Lyndsey, Guinness & owner

Fundraising Team: Wendy Bardsley

Community Connections

Our Community Fundraisers, Zara and Emma, enjoy working with our new volunteers recruited through the Holiday Help Out campaign. The campaign asked for just a couple of hours over Christmas; many who signed up have now become regular volunteers. During a late-night shopping event, two volunteers suddenly realised they knew each other very well but had lost touch. They said...

"We had a great time, and quite unexpectedly, our volunteering has put us back in touch with each other. We were very close but had lost touch for 35 years. We are overjoyed to have found each other again, thanks to Raystede!"

Sponsor tour feedback is great

Sponsor tours are underway for 2024, with 37 tours booked, and our first-ever Rabbitry tour has been a great success. We have four new volunteers - Alex, Heidi, Alison and Logan, alongside our longstanding volunteers, Karen and Nick. A huge thank you to them and all the animal care teams who make Sponsor Tours so enjoyable. Don't just take our word for it..

"It was a wonderful day, even when the weather was awful."

"Thank you for your informative and very enjoyable tour this afternoon. I'd be hugely grateful if you could pass along our thanks to your wonderful colleagues who accompanied us; particularly the Kennel Manager and her staff who showed us the dogs. A super day for us, and we will continue our support."

Lottery success!

Our mobile Lottery has been running for four months, reaching 400 players! If we continue at this rate, we should hit our target of 1,000 players in our first year, bringing in an annual income of £50K.

Write or update your Will for free!

Over the last year, staff and volunteers have written their Wills for free through our partnership with the National Free Wills Network. You are under no obligation to use the service, but we hope that if you do choose to, it will make a daunting task much easier! If you want to take advantage of this opportunity or have any questions, contact Emily on 01825 627086 or at enickels@raystede.org.

If writing your Will online is more your thing, we have partnered with Bequeathed, who offer a simple way to make your Will from the comfort of your own home. Visit www.bequeathed.org/raystede and take the online interview to create a draft of your Will. You can learn more about these services by picking up a copy of our Will Guide from Visitor Information or visiting raystede.org/free-wills.

Brighton Half Marathon

Congratulations to this amazing team of 25 runners who participated in the Brighton Half Marathon on Sunday 25 March, running 13.1 miles in the cold and windy weather. They have raised £3,894 so far, which is enough to feed all the animals in Raystede's care for a month!

There's still time to sign up and join #TeamRaystede in other challenge events:

www.raystede.org/support-us/challenge-events/



Olivia Hyde

Going the extra mile for Raystede

Eastbourne Half Marathon

This is Charlotte Skeet and Joseph Campaniello, who ran for Raystede in the Eastbourne Half Marathon on Sunday 3 March. You will know Charlotte as part of the Rehoming Team here at Raystede. Charlotte told us about her run:

"It was a tough challenge and near the end, when I felt exhausted and that I might not make it, I thought about all the animals we help at Raystede and that every step I took was helping to make sure we can support even more animals in need."

If you would like to help their fundraising and make a small contribution, visit their GoFundMe page Running for Raystede:

<https://gofund.me/ce692eec>

Well done, Charlotte and Joey!



Charlotte & Joey

i360 Challenge

At the end of March, our CEO Stephanie and Raystede Ambassador Jason Burrill, will be stepping off the i360 (dressed as Batman and Robin). They aim to raise a total of £4,924 and are currently at 82% of the target.

There is still time to sponsor them here <https://www.justgiving.com/page/jason-burrill-and-stephanie-smith-i360>

Thank you.



Jason & Stephanie aka Batman & Robin!

Finance & Resources: Diane Bate

It's a time of staffing changes in Finance at the moment. Sadly for us, Lesley has retired and she has left us with this lovely farewell message:

"As you all probably know, sadly I left work on Thursday 21 March 2024. I have worked at Raystede for the last eight years and I feel that now is the right time is to finish and enjoy retirement with my husband, family and friends. I have enjoyed the last eight years at Raystede, a lovely site to work at, enjoying views of the South Downs from my office and walking around the animal enclosures in my lunch breaks. I would like to wish the company success in the future.

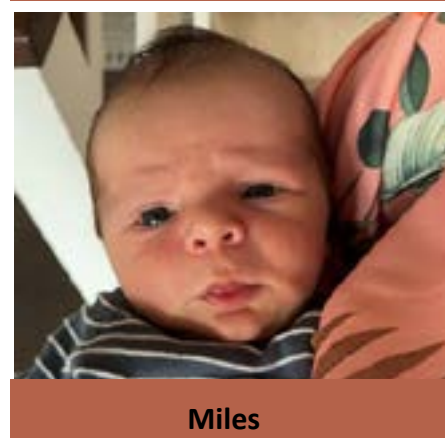
"I will miss you all but not the early starts and daily travelling!"

As you all know - Lucy is now on maternity leave and we are delighted to hear that she gave birth to Miles on 3 March 2024. He weighed 71b, 13 oz and everyone is doing well. Here is a picture of Miles.

We are delighted to welcome Iryna who is covering Lucy's maternity leave and Jason who is our new Finance Officer. You can read a bit more about them below. Do say hello when you see them.



Lesley



Miles



Iryna

"My name is Iryna Polishchuk. I joined the Finance Team on 7 February 2024. I'm Ukrainian and I'm quite new here.

I've been living in the UK for 18 months. I've got a master's degree in accounting and audit and experience in accounting in Ukraine. Also my field of interest are psychology, life-coaching and self-growing.

I'm happy to be part of Raystede family because it's close to my values -
"Help those who have difficult times".



Jason & William

"I am Jason Conrad and I joined Raystede on 4 March working in the Finance Team. With me in the photo is William who is 7 years young who lives with his friend Milly. William is an active man who enjoys his food, sleeping on his chair and regularly checking his garden. He is the fifth black and white cat I have had, and I originally had William the 1st when I was 6 years old. Milly is 14 and only has one eye and does not go out much but she enjoys playing with William and meowing for food.

I have always worked in finance and this new role allows me to continue that work while allowing me to know that, in my small way, I am helping all the animals at Raystede, both those who are permanent residents and those going to new homes."

"I have had a great welcome to Raystede."



Summer Sizzlers for Staff and Volunteers



FREE SANDWICHES OR WRAPS 🍞🥪

Daily 10am – 2pm,
collect from the Café.

FREE PET FOOD 🐕🐶

When available, we will let staff and
volunteers know – expiry dates may be
short, first come, first served.

FREE FRUIT 🍏🍐

Apples and pears from Raystede's
trees – help yourselves when in season.

FREE HYGIENE PRODUCTS 🧼🪥

Available in the staff showers areas –
please help yourselves.

FREE CLOTHING! 👕👖

A 'recycle and rehome' rail is available in
the Staff Room and in the Lewes shop.
Items may need repairing or washing.

50% STAFF DISCOUNT ON FOOD AND DRINK IN THE CAFÉ 🇬🇧🥤

Available for all staff and
volunteers during their shift.

CAR SHARING 🚗🛢️

Liftshare: www.liftshare.com/uk

Rideshark: www.rideshark.com

West Sussex Car Share:

www.westsussexcarshare.com

Or arrange an informal lift
share with colleagues.

SPARE UNIFORM 👕🧦

If you get wet or need
spare uniform, good quality
secondhand items are
available in the Staff Room.
New socks too!

Commercial & Visitor Operations: Kerry Darwin

Commercial

Another couple of good months across all commercial areas on site, online and in the high street. Every penny of profit is ploughed back into the charity and animal welfare, and I am really pleased to say Commercial profit at the end of January stands at £340,000.

You will have seen some recent changes in the café with new tables inside and out, and we are working on a solution to improve the workflow in the kitchen as we head towards the summer. We hope you have all enjoyed the soup these past few months, we switched the staff and volunteers free lunch offer back to sandwiches from 15 March, just call in and collect from the café.

Visitor operations

The new cabin is here! Our Welcome Team volunteers are settling in well to their new cabin, and certainly enjoying the bigger, warmer and more welcoming space!

We have had several new recruits join the Welcome and Engagement Team, please do stop to say hi as you pass them. To help them all manage the visitor check-in process, can you please briefly tell them you are staff, or flash your badge as you go by, especially if you are not in uniform. We task them with checking in all visitors and so they need to know they can simply let you pass, and not stop you to ask for a ticket!



Happy volunteers in their new cabin

Commercial & Visitor Operations cont...

An Ode to Charity Retail Life by Ness Hill

We are from the Hailsham shop
There are lots of things that we stock
From bric-a-brac, toys and games
High street shops to big brand names.

Donations come in all day long,
Some are good but some just pong!
Some full of hair, some brand new
This is what we sort for you.

So off to the pen to grab a bag,
Most of this is probably rag!
So off to the rag pen it must go,
Or sometimes bagged as overflow.

Donations are our daily task
Can you Gift Aid? We will ask
Sign them up and print their labels,
Take it to the sorting tables

Oh lucky me this bag smells nice-
Let's get it hung and ready to price.
Check the item really well,
After all, it needs to sell.

Check zips, pockets, buttons too –
You're the checker it's down to you.
Move it to the steaming rail,
Once that's done it's ready for sale.

Now the window usually has a theme,
An event, a colour or maybe a scene.
Customers stand outside and look,
With no idea how long it took.

Keep your windows bold and bright,
Adjust the mannequins to equal height.
Display the shelves to catch the eye
Of potential customers passing by.

When customers walk in through the door
There's always a welcoming team on the shop floor.
First impressions are very clear.
We're reasonably priced and not too dear.

Weekends come and they are busy too,
Whether you're serving, sorting or scrubbing the loo!
Don't forget to Hoover and mop,
Leaving a lovely clean and tidy shop.

Now we mustn't forget our volunteers.
Whether they're new or they've done it for years.
We appreciate everything that you do
Each and every one of you.

So if you have some time to spare,
Come and see what we have there.
You're bound to find a bargain or two,
And also meet our lovely crew.

So thank you all for coming today
And listening to what we have to say.
This ode to running a charity shop,
With endless tasks that never stop!

*First performed at the Retail RED Talk on
Monday 18 March 2024*

Marketing: Janet Parsons



Simon & Buster

Welcome to Simon

We're delighted to welcome Simon Bennett to the Marketing Team in the role of Marketing, PR and Communications Manager. Most of you will have met Simon by now but here's a little introduction from him.

"I joined Raystede just before Christmas last year and got straight to work dealing with media visits from both ITV and the BBC, a great way to get stuck into my new role and I quickly learnt all about fostering and rehoming! I previously worked as an Account Manager at a marketing agency where I handled a wide variety of marketing tasks from e-newsletters to social media, but it has always been media relations that I have enjoyed the most and so it's great to have joined Raystede to highlight all the important work we do to a wider audience.

What has been clear from the start is that there's a real sense of passion and enthusiasm at Raystede for animal welfare, and it's great to join an organisation where everyone is committed to making a real difference. There aren't that many workplaces where you can spend time with cats, dogs, ponies and rabbits and it didn't take me long to adopt one of my own! After daily visits to see Buster in the cattery, he moved in a few weeks ago and we're now enjoying life with a rescue cat."

Fostering and rehoming media frenzy!

We were delighted with the extensive media coverage we received in December and January focussed on the need for foster carers to come forward to help with our Break Away service, and rehoming, particularly for the many cats in our Cattery. We had TV features from both ITV Meridian and BBC South East, plus radio interviews, online and print media coverage. We saw a significant spike in web traffic on our 'foster an animal' and 'adopt a cat' application pages and, best of all, the coverage resulted in 19 foster applications, with 13 of those going to successful completion and the rehoming of 33 cats, the highest number cats rehomed in any month since November 2019.

We could not have done this PR without the fantastic support from the rehoming and animal care teams who are complete naturals during interviews and speak with such knowledge and passion about the animals in our care and the need to help them. Thank you to everyone involved.

How Marketing can help you!

As well as overseeing the marketing, branding and messaging for the whole of Raystede and raising awareness of our work, the Marketing Team can support you in lots of different ways.

Ben, our Digital Communications Manager, has been doing lots of improvements to the website and is a whizz with email marketing and social media. Lucy, our Marketing Officer, is a talented content producer and can put together posters, copy, photos and videos – check out her latest production, the Batman and Robin video on Stephanie's JustGiving page! We also have examples of copy, templates for items such as signs, posters and presentations, or can put new ones together for you.

How you can help Marketing!

We are always on the lookout for new content and stories to inspire people to support Raystede. Don't forget to tell the Marketing Team about your interesting case studies, successes and new projects. We're also on the search for influencers and celebrities to help spread awareness so if you have a famous face living in your neighbourhood or a celebrity schoolfriend, please let us know! Contact us at marketingmailbox@raystede.org or just grab any of us when you see us!