



# NEWSLETTER

## Autumn 2007

### What's Been Happening...

We are very happy to say that our new toy library, Carousel, is proving extremely popular, with over 70 families and groups joining in the first 10 months. We will be celebrating Carousel's first birthday on December 6th and you are all invited to share the celebrations (details below).

Over the summer we held Stay and Play sessions at West Exe Children's Centre, which were thoroughly enjoyed by all, especially the staff! The craft activities were based on a rainforest theme, and produced some lovely works of art by our younger members and their parents.



WECC nursery children have enjoyed borrowing toys to take back to their classmates, after a short play to test out what is on offer. As you can see, they like dressing up!



We ran activities at two of the Playdays in the Park - the sitballs were very popular at the Respect Festival, with children bouncing around until it got too muddy, then coming into the gazebo to play.

Merry Go Round has finally entered the technological age (well, nearly!) with our wonderful new website. Many thanks to John for all the hours of hard work designing it. You can look at photos, read latest news, find out details about both toys libraries and even more impressively, search for specific toys or books in the Merry Go Round catalogues. Carousel's toy catalogues should be available in the near future.



I would like to say a big thank you to all our volunteers, especially Lena who has been a tremendous help during Carousel's first year but is now leaving us to be the cook for Little Ones. Her views on the toy library can be read inside. I would also like to thank all the organisations who have supported us over the last year.

Fiona Daughton (Toy Library Co-ordinator)

## Invitation to Carousel's 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday Party!

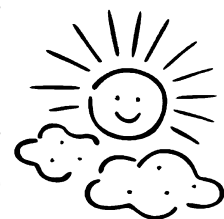
Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> December 10am - 12noon  
in the Hall at West Exe Children's Centre  
Children's Activities and Crafts, Cake and Toy Stalls, Raffle  
Refreshments and Birthday Cake!



## From the Chair...

I wish I was writing this on a hot balmy summer day but alas I cannot say this is the case. However, despite the weather, it is a good time to go to your toy library to play and choose some toys that will enable you to do something different apart from dodging the rain!

Both Merry Go Round and Carousel are busy and are staffed by Fiona, Nicky and Bev, all experienced people in the world of families and play and they can help you with ideas for the winter months.



We have gained some new members to the committee and so we will have some new ideas to share. We are again moving into a difficult financial time for Merry Go Round, but we are hopeful our grant applications and other requests will not go unheeded.

Thanks to all of you who support and use our resources and if you would like to do more for us, please see the toy librarians at the sessions.

Pat Cusa (Chair)

## Volunteering at Carousel

**Lena Western** already had a year's experience of voluntary work at the West Exe Children's Centre when Carousel Toy Library opened, and she began helping as a Volunteer.

### A place where friendships can be made

For Lena and other parents this opportunity to meet together is extremely valuable, and a place where friendships are built. Parents who are on their own or new to the area can feel a bit isolated and need the chance to mix with other people their own age.

### Try before you buy!

Lena says she particularly appreciates the chance for her two children to try out toys from the Toy Library. She and other family members have in the past spent a lot of money on toys that after a short while get pushed into cupboards and don't come out again! At the Toy Library, parents can come, hire, let their children get enjoyment from the toys, then bring them back and swap them for something else. It doesn't matter how many times each item is hired, Lena says it still wouldn't add up to the cost of buying the toy.



### Learning from watching your child play

Lena helps put out a selection of toys and additionally parents can take any toy from the stock cupboards. She has noticed how parents watch their children play, and how children will go and join in other children's play. In this way small children get to mix together and play before they are old enough for playgroups.

### The value of being a volunteer

Lena says that being a volunteer is very worthwhile. It has given her a sense of purpose, and the opportunity to meet new people and to learn new things, eg how to catalogue toys and how the

Toy Library systems work. She gets particular satisfaction from being able to reunite missing pieces of equipment when they turn up again. She also enjoys hearing other parent's views on toys, and being able to recommend toys to other parents that have given her own children pleasure.

Interview by Bev Abbott

## Thank Heavens for the Toy Library!

Okay, so there is no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, BUT, for families and child carers in Exeter there is the Toy Library.

I work in a Charitable Pre-school in a local Church Hall and, like so many other Pre-schools, our toys and equipment are either donated by out-grown children or bought with hard-earned fundraising money. We would love to be able to flick through the glossy catalogues and say; "I'll have this, and that, and the other." Our reality isn't like that (and probably never will be). This is where Fiona comes to the rescue.

Last term we explored celebrations and festivals with the children. Under Fiona's guidance we borrowed a superb book from Merry Go Round, 'Usborne's Encyclopedia of World Religions' which introduces many celebrations from different cultures and was fascinating for us adults to read.

Fiona then directed me to other books which are written specifically for children and which contain appropriate photographs and illustrations to bring the festivals of Divali, Eid-ul-Fitr and Hanukkah to life. Some of the books contained ideas of activities suitable for doing with the children. Having the Toy Library and Scrapstore in the same building makes it easy to get scrap for making some of the ideas in the books.

We also borrowed sets of A4 laminated photographs depicting scenes from the relevant countries which were a great starting point for discussions with the children. We were able to supplement our own range of multi-cultural dolls and dressing-up clothes and these were very popular.

Fiona's enthusiasm and resourcefulness is infectious and makes a trip to the Toy Library really enjoyable. Perhaps that is why I always come out with more than I intended. And the great thing is, it is affordable. Thank you, Toy Library.

Jude Green, St Mark's Pre-school



## Your Favourite toys... send us your pictures and ideas!

### My Top 5 Toys from Merry Go Round

Stan (aged 9)

- ◆ Balloon Covers
- ◆ Crazy Golf
- ◆ K'Nex Moving Dinosaur
- ◆ Magnetic Darts
- ◆ Marble Run

Susie (aged 7)

- ◆ Happy Land Church
- ◆ My Little Puppy
- ◆ Three Little Pigs
- ◆ Crazy Faces
- ◆ Woodkins Dolls



Pictures by:  
Katinka,  
Aaron and  
Susie



## West Exe and Carousel

I am a Family Support Worker at West Exe Children's Centre and a deputy Team Leader at the Saturday Club - a club for children aged 8yrs to 18yrs with special needs. I have recently joined both these services to Carousel Toy Library here at West Exe Children's Centre.

The Saturday Club has limited funding and there is rarely spare money for play equipment. We also have limited storage space, especially for bigger pieces of equipment. By using the toy library I have been able to borrow a good selection of toys that are ideal for children with special needs. It enables me to try out the toys before looking for the funds to buy such equipment which is usually very expensive. We have a total of 30 children with a range of sensory, motor and behavioural difficulties, in three teams so as you can imagine it is difficult to provide the right equipment for all these children. The toy library allows me to experiment with different types of toys and to get in specific toys for specific children.

As a Family Support worker the toy library enables me to add variety to our equipment. We see different children and families so it is nice to be able to collect a special toy or piece of equipment. It can also help with our aims for a family; if we are trying to encourage a specific area of play we can hire a toy that will promote this. We encourage our families to use the toy library and this is more easily done when they see us using it.

Fiona is often able to recommend toys or equipment if we describe a particular need or area that we wish to promote which is always helpful. The toy library is a very useful resource for both these services.



*Andrea Neascu, Family Support Worker*

### Dates For Your Diary

- 28th November: AGM 7.30pm at the White Hart, South Street. All welcome.
- 6th December: Carousel's 1st Birthday Party, 10am-12noon at West Exe Children's Centre
- 20th December: last toy library sessions before Christmas
- 21st December - 7th January CLOSED
- 8th January: Merry Go Round reopens
- 10th January: Carousel reopens



### Merry Go Round

Tuesdays 1.00pm - 4.00pm  
Thursdays 10.00am - 1.00pm

Exeter Scrapstore  
Gordon Road  
Exeter EX1 2DH  
telephone 01392 436777



### Carousel Opening Hours

Thursdays 10.00am - 1.00pm

West Exe Children's Centre  
Cowick Street  
Exeter EX4 2HL  
telephone 01392 279361

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See us online at [www.mgrtoylibrary.org](http://www.mgrtoylibrary.org)