

ONE Haverhill Community Grants

REACH Community Projects (2012 grant recipient)



For Haverhill charity REACH, two ONE Haverhill community grants have made a world of difference to many families in the town and one family in particular.

REACH Community Projects was officially launched in January 2010 by Euro MP Richard Howitt and is the umbrella organisation of community projects aimed at relieving the effects of poverty in and around the Haverhill area.

REACH is administered by River of Life Community Church and is an acronym meaning Restore, Encourage, Action in the Community, bringing Hope.

The charity initially applied for £5,000 in the first 2012 round of grants which enabled them to take on one part time permanent member of staff to run and coordinate its furniture bank which provides secondhand items to families in need through homelessness or moving on from supported housing disasters such as fire or flood and those in poverty.

Ray Earls was a long term unemployed father living in Haverhill who himself had been supported by the charity's foodbank after he had to give up work to look after his wife who was ill, putting huge financial strain on the family. To give something back Ray had started to volunteer at the charity, helping its Director Henry Wilson set up the furniture bank. The £5,000 grant enabled Ray to be taken on as a part time member of staff which meant that not only could the charity help more families in need with furniture but that it had given a job to a family man in need of support.



That initial boost to help take Ray on part time has given the charity time to find funds to not only continue the post but expand the number of people who can be helped by the furniture bank and give Ray additional hours.

Ray said: "Being involved with REACH has helped me become a more confident husband, happier father, and person.

“If it was not for Foodbank and Christians Against Poverty, I don’t think we would have coped. As for Furniture Bank I just love what I’m doing; it’s certainly lifted me – nothing makes me happier than seeing a client smile when we deliver some furniture!”

The charity was successful in applying for a second grant in the latter half of 2012 for £2,500 to enable more computers to be purchased and linked to a server for the organisation. Not only has this improved the service that REACH can provide to people in need in the town but it has enabled more people who do not have access to computers or the internet a much needed resource to look for work, apply for jobs, benefits and research housing options.

In just the first four months since the new computers were installed over 100 people used them to help search for work and housing, a huge increase on the 200 people a year who used the limited computer resources before.

Henry Wilson said: “Local support is the best support you can get. Applying for funding outside might well be successful but there is nothing like applying locally for funds where you are known for the work you do. It’s a warm application if you like.

“The grants are a great platform to enable local groups to launch new projects and initiatives. The grants are up to £5,000 which is a significant amount of money. It changed Ray and his family’s life and many many other families in Haverhill.”

For more information on REACH visit www.reachhaverhill.org.uk