

Great Day Out – Snap!



The Eden Project is an environmental education charity and a regeneration project. They have developed a range of approaches for engaging the public with the issues and opportunities that a sustainable future presents.

Location

Salvation Army Lifehouse in Plymouth and the Eden Project



Aim



To provide homeless people with the opportunity to learn a new skill and create an exhibition



Getting started

Photo by Simon Barber

Great Day Out hosts small group visits to Eden for socially-excluded groups, vulnerable, and hard-to-reach people, it enables people to visit Eden, who otherwise would not come here. Each day is tailor-made and we do follow-on work back in the community to ensure lasting impacts. By offering an inspirational setting and neutral ground we help people make positive changes and gain the motivation required to transform their lives.

Background

We wanted to tell the story of the socially excluded people we have worked with over the last four years and an exhibition space in the form of a very fancy shed had become available in a prominent position at the Eden Project. So when Simon Barber, a professional photographer, offered Eden's Great Day Out project his services, free of charge, we leapt at the chance.

Engagement activities

Getting to know each other and learning how to use the cameras

So we had an exhibition space and a story to tell, we even had a professional photographer but we needed to find an interested group to take part. We publicized the opportunity to all the groups we have worked with, homeless hostels, the probation service, youth services etc., and selected the Plymouth Salvation Army. We took our photographer to meet the group in Plymouth armed with digital cameras, and some pictures of the Eden Project. Most had never visited Eden before so we gave them an idea of what to expect, and explained that we wanted them to come and take some photographs that would appear alongside Simon's portraits of them at the exhibition. The group were really keen so we showed everyone how to use the cameras, talked about composition, light, contrast and some technical things before sending them on a mission to take some photos within the hostel grounds. When everyone had had a go, we reconvened to talk through why specific subjects had been chosen, in order to get across how meaning and stories can be conveyed through images. The group was really excited about coming to Eden the following week and getting started on the project.



The Great Day Out



We welcomed the group and talked about the plan for the day over tea and coffee, and gave everyone a camera before setting off on our journey. On the way to the rainforest we did a quick 'frame it' exercise to get everyone thinking about the composition of their photographs and what they wanted to convey. We gave everyone a frame and asked them to frame something that they felt represented them for example: "This twig represents me because it looks a bit plain, but it is strong and flexible and can bend with what life throws at it." We did a guided tour of the rainforest, looked at the exhibition space where the photos would be displayed and had lunch together before allocating everyone in the group a time to meet Simon for their portrait, in a place of their choice on site that meant something to them. Although the rest of the group were invited to go ice-skating while people had their photographs taken, they decided they would rather carry on taking photographs instead and all the participants left Eden with smiles on their faces.

The Follow-up

The following week we met up with the group – one of them even had the good sense to bake a marvellous cake for the occasion – and did the 'post production' work with the photos they had taken, selecting, editing, cropping and generally making the photos just right as well as asking the people involved to write down their thoughts to go with the photos.



Photo by Simon Barber



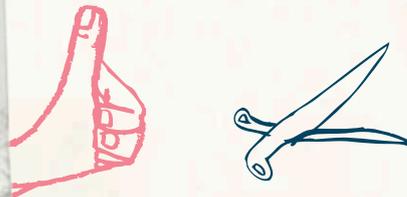
In the shed

Photo by Simon Barber

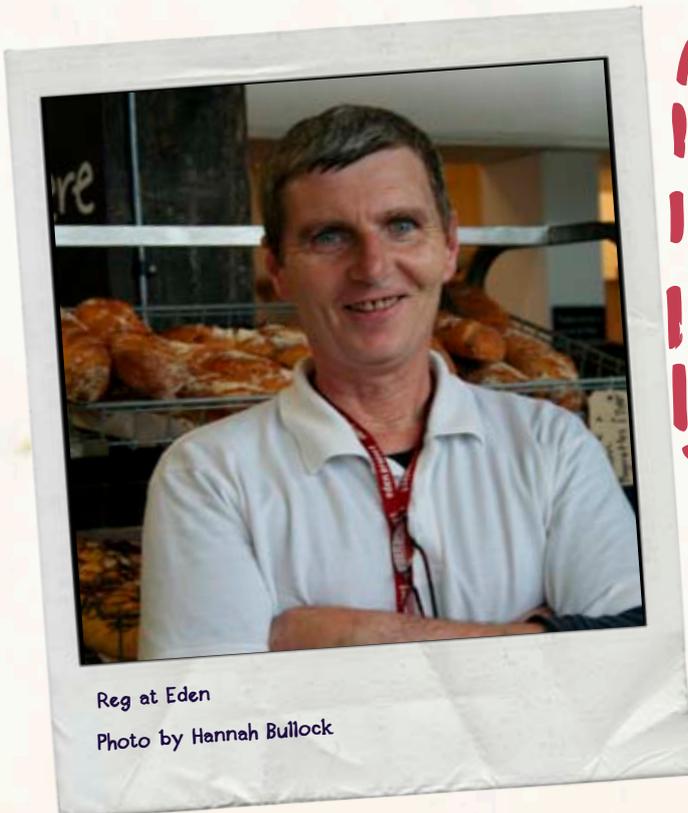


The Launch

Everyone loves a good celebration, so to thank the people involved we invited everyone back to Eden for an Exhibition Launch Party a month later, to see the photos they took and their portraits on display. The local press came and everyone felt very proud of what they had achieved. There was, of course, cake, nibbles, music, drinks, certificates, interviews, a ribbon and some scissors.



One of the participants is now a volunteer at Eden, another has a job as a catering manager and the others who took part are well on their way to independent living thanks to the great work of the Salvation Army in Plymouth.

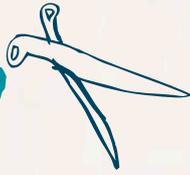


"You do need that door to be open for you, for someone to go, fair enough then, alright there's a job going here if you want to volunteer... Everywhere I went, doors were shut, because I was 'trampy', all people saw was the shell they didn't see what was inside"

Reg, GDO Snap! participant



Techniques



- △ A friendly attitude
- Photography as a means of self-expression
- △ Use of an empty space for an exhibition
- Evaluation forms
- △ Picture frames
- ◇ An inspirational setting
- △ Establishing relationships
- Cake



At the wheel

Photo by Simon Barber

Key concepts



- △ Involving socially excluded people means treating everyone normally, equally and with respect.
- Learning new skills is a great way to get people involved and improve their confidence.
- △ Doing new things together encourages people to build friendships.
- Flexible facilitation in an informal style helps get the best out of people.
- △ Spending the day in an inspiring and different place that is neutral ground can give people new ideas and motivation.
- Challenge the public's preconceptions by putting the work of these groups in public places.
- △ Celebrating achievements is important with any group, especially for people who usually get little recognition from society.

