

Who does Bag Books help?

Bag Books, the learning disability literacy charity, exists to help enrich the lives of children, teenagers and adults with the most profound intellectual impairments – sometimes with a developmental age below six months.

How does Bag Books help them?

We provide educational resources (multi-sensory story-packs) and training to their carers and educators. Story-packs are specifically devised for those who cannot understand words and pictures. They offer learning, communication and fun to those with severe learning disabilities (a developmental age of up to six years) or profound learning disabilities (a developmental age of under eighteen months).

What is a multi-sensory story-pack?

Multi-sensory stories are told through actions, linking emotional and physical experiences. Each story-pack comes with a simple tale and relevant actions which capture the listener's attention through sight, touch, motion, sound or smell.



Topical Fundraiser

20 May: How about a Eurovision Party?

Watch the show, live from Athens; charge friends and colleagues to come along; hold a sweep-stake to win a bottle of Ouzo; serve a European or all-Greek menu! Too late for Eurovision? Think of another theme.

Desmond's Scrapbook

Well, my 2005 ended with a bang! I flew out to the Mediterranean birthday party of my good friend Kathleen Herron of the Sunday Times.

I was also thrilled to report back to the St. James's Place Foundation – who have been funding me for a year – that my story-pack has helped over a thousand youngsters in that time.

All that hard partying and hard work has tired me out. I'm off to bed.



Now more than ever ...

2006 is shaping up to be the busiest year in Bag Books' history. With more beneficiaries (both children and, very excitingly, adults), requests for story-packs are increasing rapidly. At one point in March we had over 100 story-packs "on order" with the workshop team doing overtime to keep up with demand.

Even better than our being busy is the fact that very many of these requests are coming from new users, vindicating our recent concentration on "spreading the word".

Chris Fuller, Bag Books' Director, has been on the road a great deal over the past few months, training and presenting from Bexley to Birmingham; from Port Talbot to Peterborough.

At Lewisham Library, their Lifelong Learning team are interested in developing a programme with multi-sensory literature. The "0 to 3 Matters" conference in Kent led to many new referrals and more requests for both resources and training. Our work and contacts with the Pre-School Learning Alliance have increased our work with

child development workers, early years teachers, family play groups and, of course, families themselves.

Across Essex, there was an upswing in our work, with highlights being storytelling and training sessions in Ilford, and a day with children from a local special school in Colchester Library, as

part of Essex Book Festival (see inside). In Birmingham, we trained staff at Sure Start East and Sure Start Balsall and are part of the "Right to Read: Young Readers" project in May.

All this is to illustrate that BB is working harder

than ever, thanks to our team and our supporters.

If you know a library, nursery, school or family which could benefit from Bag Books, give them this newsletter or just our number: 020 7385 4021.



Another new title

Join Georgia and Ben's Easter egg hunt, in Bag Books' new story-pack for younger children, "The Easter Surprise".

After searching for eggs all through the garden, round trees and behind flowerpots, all they can find are empty foil wrappers. Their chocolate has been stolen by somebody – or something!

"The Easter Surprise" is from a story by our own Senior Craft Artist, Sarah Lewis, who was inspired by memories of her own childhood. If you think you have a multi-sensory story in you, click to www.bagbooks.org/multi_sensory.html to

download our Writers' Guidelines.

Watch this space for Bag books' next new story-pack.



Workshop improvements

With the help of some grants, we have been upgrading the Bag Books workshop.

A precision table-top scroll saw has increased the speed of many jobs, whilst maintaining accuracy and safety; and our new specialist multi-angle vice can be used by both our workshop team and our Friday morning "Back to Work" group of local adults



with profound disabilities.

Downstairs, in our storage rooms, we have installed a large shelving system which has allowed us to hold an increased stock of parts for our rapidly increasing range of titles. Upstairs we have more shelves on our walls to hold part-made story-packs.

Finally, a semi-industrial sewing machine has meant that we can now produce sewn items faster and with less stress (both to domestic machines and craft workers!).

Thanks to the Daisy Trust and the Fence Club for funding these improvements.

What a lot on eBay!

Most internet-savvy people know about eBay, the online auction and sales site. Now Bag Books has started using eBay to sell things to help raise money. To date, we have made £189 from 6 items.

People on eBay sell everything from cigarette cards to houses, so if you have something

which might sell (it should be either "collectable" or something unused or new) get in touch with us.

You can link to what's available (or offer us something to sell) via our website:

www.bagbooks.org

Essex Book Festival

Colchester Library hosted Bag Books, in March, as part of the Essex Book Festival. It was the first time children with special needs had been specifically included in the Festival and staff at the Library were delighted that local children, from Market Field School, could take part.

Chris Fuller held three storytelling sessions with pre-teens and teenagers with severe learning difficulties. Staff from Market Field took part throughout the day and were joined by staff from Lexden Springs School, another Colchester special school.

If your local Literary-, Arts- or Community

Festival does not include children with special needs, we would be thrilled to help. Put them in touch with us!



Mini Updates

Year-round greetings – Remember, e-cards from Benevolus.com are just as handy for birthdays, festivals or other celebrations as for Xmas. Choose your card, choose your charity (BB, we hope!), and send.

Boing! – Families at Zebedee nursery in Putney raised £150 for Bag Books at their Christmas Fayre. Thanks guys, it's much appreciated!

Playing up – Many thanks to the Miller Centre Players for a benefit run of Terence Rattigan's "Separate Tables" in Caterham. The ten performances in January raised £1,742.03 towards Bag



Books' work. Special mention must go to Lawrence Marsh for nominating us.

Good Company? – Normally, large companies only support charities nominated by a member of staff. So, if someone you know could suggest that their firm supports Bag Books, we can send whatever information they need.

Next Text – in the summer, Bag Books will launch a text donation facility, so donors can give via their mobile phones. We will keep you posted..

Summer Focus

You might remember from Storyline 5, that 2006 sees the start of our Focus Project, aimed at reaching school-age children who have not previously benefited from using multi-sensory story-packs.

Bag Books is appealing to you to contribute towards the Focus Project. Your donation will go towards the £45,000 annual costs, advising schools and nurseries, and giving them free story-packs.