

Connect Reading helps business in Reading invest in their local community by using the skills and enthusiasm of their staff or the resources they are able to donate. Below are a few examples of the kind of community support we have successfully arranged.

Long Term Investment

Reading Area Charities Together (RACT)

Connect Reading has been working on the RACT project since September 2005. Charities involved are [The Bicycle Helmet Initiative Trust](#), [Care Cultural Integration](#), [Reading YMCA](#), [PACT](#), [Reading Single Homeless Project](#), [Home-Start Reading](#), [REAP Resettlement Agency](#), [ReadiBus](#) and [Berkshire Community Foundation's Reading Fund](#). Each charity works directly with beneficiaries in Reading – so the monies donated improve lives locally. For more information visit www.ract.org.uk.

Ann Piper, Chair of RACT says, "RACT is a fantastic new initiative for a group of 9 local charities that have come together to offer potential donors a variety of choice and the opportunity to give a bit back to the community where they live and work."

Projects

BG Group East Reading Summer Project

BG Group wanted to get involved with a community close to their offices on Thames Valley Park. We recommended that they look for a project that would support their local community in East Reading. Connect Reading then approached The Waterside Centre, also based on Thames Valley Park, with their canoeing skills and their ability to coach and enthuse young people, a partnership was created and over the school summer break for the past two years young people have been learning a new skill and enjoying the River Thames, many for the first time.

The Waterside Centre's Director, John Cooper says, "Canoeing is a high dependency activity requiring one fully trained coach to eight young people. The support from BG Group has enabled us to market and deliver canoeing to groups that would not otherwise have been able to afford it."

Malcolm Brown, for BG Group said "BG Group was pleased to support the activities at the Waterside Centre - it is a great opportunity to give young people the opportunity to experience water sports and for the majority to learn a new sport."



5

6

Team Challenges that make a difference

- In 2006 over 1,800 hours of support were donated to local community projects

The Parents And Children Together **Coley Park Family Centre** is a much needed resource for families in the area, a safe place for new Mums to come with their young children.

Josie from PACT said: "We are very appreciative of all the help given by CitiFinancial and are very grateful for their support. It is an excellent addition to the facilities at the drop in centre and could not have been achieved without the help of the CitiFinancial volunteers."

Colin Whawell of CitiFinancial said: "It was a good experience and helped us to realise we can actually put something back into the community, particularly when it helps children and parents."

Investing in our Community

- In 2006 Connect Reading members donated equipment with a value in excess of £80,000 to local community organisations

SKIDZ – The Reading Motor Education Project

This project is open to everyone in the community but is mainly targeted at the small but significant group of disengaged young people who are currently outside the education system. Many of these students leave education with no formal qualifications and very few skills. The principal group at risk are boys who can benefit from learning through practical skills.

SKIDZ Reading offers positive activities for up to 100 excluded or at risk young people, by preparing them for long-term employment or vocational training.

Steve Godfrey from SKIDZ said "The support from Connect Reading and other organisations has been a key part of being able to provide this service and we look forward to developing these partnerships in the future"

Ruth Spicer from Connect Reading says "We are proud to be on the steering committee for such an excellent and much needed project and will continue to support the Motor Project in anyway we can."

To find out more about Connect Reading contact:



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Companies Working with Communities



1

Connecting actions, ideas & people

Connect Reading is a partnership between the business, public and voluntary sectors that actively participates in creating a better quality of life for all in the Reading area. We provide information and expertise on community involvement opportunities for organisations of all sizes and support our members in the delivery of their corporate responsibility objectives.



Did you know: -

Although Reading is a thriving centre of commerce it also has its share of community issues.

- ▶ More than 10% of Reading's workforce has no qualifications at all (2001 census).

- ▶ Several Reading wards fall within the 10% most deprived wards in England in terms of housing and education, while 4 wards fall within the 5% most deprived.

- ▶ The average house price in Reading is £200,275 (HM Land Registry Feb 2007).

- ▶ Reading is one of 30 areas recognised by the Home Office as having a particular problem with substance misuse and associated crime.

- ▶ Reading has the largest proportion of lone parents with dependant children in Berkshire (2001 Census).

- ▶ Nearly 500 16 to 18 year olds in Reading are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

- ▶ Unemployment in Reading is highest in certain geographical areas such as Central and South Reading and amongst black and minority ethnic sections of the population.

- ▶ During the financial year ending 2005 Reading produced 72,320 tonnes of waste.

- ▶ Over 45% of Reading's emissions are from commercial and industrial energy use.

- ▶ Reading has 13% more jobs available than people to fill them (Learning & Skills Council).

- ▶ Reading is a 'Diamond for Growth' and has Central Government 'New Growth Point' status.

Aims and objectives

- To facilitate effective joint working between business, public and voluntary sectors to help address key economic and social issues affecting Reading.
- To promote the benefits of engaging in the community to businesses of all sizes creating opportunities to participate in local projects contributing to social inclusion.
- To develop strategic and innovative business responses to issues of mutual concern, such as employment, skills development, education and the environment.
- To provide a cross-sector forum for the exchange of ideas, best practice and resources between businesses, public and voluntary sectors.



2



3

Images:

1. Yell team challenge
2. Pride of Reading Winner 2006 for Business in Action, Broad Street Mall
3. CitiFinancial team challenge at Coley Park Family Centre
4. Microsoft team challenge at Berkshire County Blind Society
5. BG Group Summer Project 2006
6. RACT Launch 2007



4

How your business can benefit

- Access to a brokerage service between businesses and the voluntary sector
- Closer integration with the local community
- Opportunities for staff development and training by introducing your people to new challenges and unfamiliar situations.
- Increased staff satisfaction and motivation through a genuine feeling of contributing to the community and working for a company that makes a difference locally.
- Enhanced local reputation and brand awareness, for example through positive press coverage and publicity.
- Contributing to raising local skill levels
- The opportunity to contribute to strategic policy development and implementation.

How your business can get involved

- Expertise, knowledge and ideas applied to help address local community issues.
- The time, energy, enthusiasm, experience and ideas of your employees.
- Access to resources including, for example, facilities and equipment.
- Support for local initiatives at the appropriate time and level.
- Contribute to the decision making process concerning important issues facing all of us in Reading.
- Offer work experience, mentoring and training opportunities.
- Effective engagement with issues that effect business, such as crime, skills development, the environment and social deprivation.

Join **CONNECT READING** today.