

Guildford Shakespeare Company's intergenerational project, Spirit of Youth, performs Romeo and Juliet in local care home.

***Spirit of Youth*, the intergenerational drama project from Guildford Shakespeare Company (GSC), unites local school children and care home residents for a final performance of *Romeo and Juliet*.**

Spirit of Youth began in 2018 by bringing together residents of the Queen Elizabeth Care Home and children from Weyfield Primary School in Guildford. After the success of their *A Midsummer Night's Dream* performance in December, a new group of children joined the residents for ten weeks of sessions. Under GSC's guidance the children and residents created their own version of *Romeo and Juliet*, performed in the care home this Spring.

"It has been wonderful to return to QEP and see that the confidence the residents discovered in the first term was still present." Says Francesca McNally, GSC's Education Officer. "They have become even more willing to try new things; actively playing with the children, creating characters and doing things that they thought they were no longer capable of doing".

The benefits of diverse age groups working together has been obvious throughout the project. Home Manger of Queen Elizabeth Park, Heather De-Ninis comments "I think that the programme with the elderly meeting the young benefits both parties and provides an excellent interaction for our residents".

The residents involved, aged between 69 and 97, showing great improvements in their confidence (a 47% increase), mood and well-being (26%) sociability (26%) as well as mobility and physical strength (33%). Joan Hopwood, aged 85, a resident who took part in the project adds "I enjoyed my time with the children and helping them to further their acting abilities. Congratulations to the organisers because it is an excellent idea".

The children from Weyfield School, aged 7-8, were twice as likely to listen to instructions in class (a 112% increase), more likely to work well with others (91%) and learn independently (71%). "Amazing relationships have been formed between children and residents." Explains Sarah Knight, Family Support Worker at Weyfield Primary School. "Every week the children are happy to attend and their engagement in learning has increased. I was speaking to a parent last Friday. He was overjoyed at the increase in his daughter's confidence. They had attended a big family party and his usually shy daughter, who never had had the confidence before stood up and sang!"

***Spirit of Youth* is part of *Brave New World*, GSC's year-long programme of outreach projects, which seeks to reduce social isolation and assist disadvantaged schools and individuals across Surrey.** Many of the projects are free-to-access pilot-programmes and GSC will be able to share their experiences with local authorities and charities to encourage further projects and continued provision in Surrey and across the UK.

For more details about the *Brave New World* projects, visit the Outreach pages of the website (www.guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk), call 01483 301590, or email using education@guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk.

For a short video on *Spirit of Youth*, visit the GSC Blog on the GSC website (direct link: bit.ly/soyvid).

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Note to Editors

Established in 2006, GSC is a professional site-responsive theatre company.

Using non-theatre venues, performances are fresh and inventive, creating an immediate, inclusive and above all, unique theatrical experience.

**Mayor's Award for Access 2014; Guildford Life With Style Awards, Best Cultural Event of the Year 2006 & 2007/8;*

Toast of Surrey Business Awards Finalist 2010, 2011, 2016; Eagle Radio Biz Awards Finalist 2015