

Art helps to break down age barriers

By Jo Mason

COMMUNITY spirit in Silkmore has been strengthened thanks to a pioneering project designed to break-down age stereotypes.

Young and old have worked together to create an art display at St Peter's Church in Rickerscote after being granted £4,000 in funding from Stafford Borough Council.

The collection, which includes 17 portraits, collages and images, is the result of the Building Bridges in Silkmore project, an initiative set up by the borough council and Staffordshire County Council.

Staffordshire Youth Service Worker for the Stafford area, April Lewis, said: "The project began in February of this year by bringing young and older members of Silkmore together to find out more about each other and to build a strong community spirit.

"Through photography workshops, creating artwork and dramatic performances, the group were given the opportunity to express their current perceptions of each other, and to overcome any negative views they had.

"This exhibition visually shows the journey that these people took to understanding each other, and will hopefully make people think about how they view others and how perceptions can change to help people to work together."

Community Safety Officer Wendy Hall, said: "The display is extremely interesting and well worth a visit. It is fantastic to see this local community working together creatively to break down barriers between the young and old.

"We hope to display the exhibition at our civic offices after it finishes at St Peter's church."

County councillor and support member for lifelong learning, Eric Drinkwater, said: "The Building Bridges initiative has led to a much stronger community spirit in Silkmore, and this exhibition is just one of a number of actions that the group will now undertake together to improve where they live. The project highlights the county council's commitment to working with communities to make Staffordshire a great place to live, and has really inspired these young people to become positive members of society."

The exhibition will be open to the public until the end of April at the Silkmore Lane church.

Opening times are Tuesdays - 7.30pm to 8pm, Wednesdays - 10am to 11am, Thursdays - 7.30pm to 8pm, Fridays - 12 noon to 1pm, Saturdays - 9.30am to 10am and Sundays - 10.15am to 12 noon.

Any young people interested in taking advantage of the range of opportunities offered by the Staffordshire Youth Service should log-on to: <http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/YouthService> or ring the Stafford area office on 01785 841350.



ARTISTIC: Kathleen Hutchinson with a photograph from the exhibition. Sharon Aris.