

Day of the Girl Report

On December of 2011, the United Nations General Assembly declared October 11 as International Day of the Girl Child, a day dedicated to recognizing girls' rights, as well as the challenges that girls face throughout the world. International Day of the Girl Child aims to improve the safety, health, and education of girls worldwide, by investing both time and money into research and women's rights initiatives.

International Day of the Girl Norwich is a day that brings the community together; it is designed to empower girls through participation in fun activities such as craft and drama workshops, and to spread information about the obstacles that girls face on a daily basis. It is an annual event that is open to the community, primarily targeting young people. People come and participate in zine-making, drama workshops, arts and crafts, and this year there was additionally, a chance to make a phenakistoscope. On a global scale, International Day of the Girl Child focuses on collecting and analyzing data regarding policies, opportunities, and obstacles that girls face on a global scale - such as reproductive health and rights, protection against unwanted pregnancies, gender-based violence, and the access to and quality of education for women. The goal of International Day of the Girl Child, is to track and find ways to generate progress towards solutions for the systemic inequalities that girls face. By specifically focusing resources and research on girl-relevant issues, girls will be able to monitor progress and find solutions for the most detrimental problems.

Celebration of International Day of the Girl Norwich consisted of a variety of artistic and creative activities which were aimed at children of all genders, ages and abilities. The day began

with the volunteers preparing the space with displays of previous Day of the Girl artwork and interesting age appropriate feminist information. The space held a variety of child friendly activities such as table tennis, a ball pit, computers, bean bags and snooker tables. As people arrived they were able to explore the space and try the activities as they pleased. These activities were available for the duration of the day and motivated people to look around the Day of the Girl Norwich and therefore join in some of our main events, run by local Norwich artists and creatives.

As mentioned previously, Day of the Girl Norwich consisted of different events and activities. The first event, a zine making session, run by “Forevertoofar” took place around 10am. ‘Forevertoofar’, is a local illustrator whose designs particularly focus on mythical creatures and the female body. Zine making consisted of all participants creating miniature magazines of anything they found interesting. ‘GirlsRoar!’ held the next event, a drama workshop that began at 11am. This workshop consisted of theatrical games to encourage the children and adults to feel comfortable and energized in order to increase confidence and prompt imagination. ‘GirlsRoar!’ is an organization that platforms ‘girls’ voices from across Norfolk and beyond. The third activity of the day was Art with Katherine Gilmartin. Gilmartin, is a Norwich based artist that explores how we associate ourselves with our bodies through creative expression. Her activities consisted of encouraging the participants to draw self-portraits in a way contrasting to how they would typically represent themselves. This included animals, dinosaurs and mythical creatures. Roger Hewins, a film-maker who focuses mainly on Artists’ Film, video, and documentary production, ran the last activity of the day. Hewins is also a lecturer on film & video production at the University of East Anglia. His activity involved making ‘phenakistoscope’ film which is an old fashioned animation device which creates the illusion of

motion. Using examples from his previous workshops, Mr. Hewins demonstrated how drawing symbols in different positions on a wheel can create the illusion of movement when spun in a mirror. The children alongside the volunteers tried different designs, comparing the patterns that worked and the ones that were less successful. All activities that took place during Day of the Girl were inclusive and encouraged creativity, imagination and teamwork.

Publicity for the event stemmed through using social media. The Facebook page, “International Day of The Girl Norwich”, uploaded a poster full of the event information which was encouraged to be shared, so varied networks of Facebook friends would be able to see the event was on to participate. The Facebook page also contained individual posts to advertise the separate workshops. For example, Harry’s Theatre Studio encouraged those who could be a “street dance star, an extraordinary actor, a prima ballerina or a total beginner” to come and show off their talents or just have fun. By directly addressing those who like to dance, or act, grabs their attention and makes them want to come and participate at an event which is hosting the activity they are interested in. Meanwhile, by not excluding the beginners, the event generates a wider target audience so people of all description are invited and numbers of participation are larger.

Just like Facebook, the social media platform of Twitter was also also utilize. Through the handle @GirlsdayNorwich, it also provided an excellent advertising platform because unlike Facebook, followers you necessarily may not know, can see the poster and retweet it so a wide range of people can come to the event. Also, Twitter was used to instantly upload photos that capture the fun of the event, so if people thought an activity they missed looked fun from the photograph, they would be attracted to come along later and participate in the next activity that was advertised.

The previous posts before the event were geared towards increasing attendance., For example, by advertising that Day of the Girl Norwich was going to be discussed on BBC Norfolk, organizers created awareness so that people can tune in and decide from the extra information if they would like to attend the event. Through partnering with the Twitter handle @girlsroar, the International Day of the Girl Norwich is promoted on a global scale, as people worldwide can see what the girls of Norwich are doing.

The International Day of the Girl Norwich was not only advertised online, but by physical means to increase attendance. A banner which displayed the information that the event was occurring was hung on the railings outside to draw in spontaneous passers-by. It was also big enough to be visible to those in cars or on the bus, who once out of their vehicles, could be enticed to investigate. As the venue was large, another event was taking place in a different section of the building, so copies of the poster in a leaflet size was left in the reception. Therefore people who may have come for that event could know that the Day of the Girl Norwich event was on as well, and hopefully be influenced to come along to the next room to participate while they are there.

A group from the Women's Institute of Norwich did attend. Through the various forms of advertising discussed they had heard about the Day of the Girl event and believed it linked nicely with their institute as both believe in the empowerment of females. They engaged with the volunteers at the events in order to find out details and how they could get involved in the future. Consequently attendance would only increase if a crossover event did take place with both women and girls engaging in future activities.

Online mediums were not only used for promoting the event, but also for reviewing. Articles such as, 'International Day of the Girl was Marked in Norwich' by Geraldine Scott

which described the day were published by local news websites the Eastern Daily Press and Norwich Evening News. She also included quotes and statistics about why the Day of the Girl event is necessary to young girls to include groups such as the girl guides, which can increase attendance by spreading awareness to girls clubs to come participate

Local support also came from the Visions for Change website who promoted the event as they back local progressive groups in Norwich, such as the Day of the Girl Community group. Those people who visit their website would be interested in their local community, therefore attracted to participate in an event that supports the girls of their community. Lastly, the Day of the Girl website itself generates engagement for those looking forward to their upcoming events and provides the information to excite and encourage people to attend.

As mentioned earlier, there were four main events this year. Overall, all of them were successful for different reasons. These were the following events and the reason why they were successful.

1 – Zine-Making Session

This event took place early at 10 a.m. Not many people had arrived meaning that it is relatively difficult to evaluate this event, as only two young girls took part. Zine-making in general is something that people of all ages can get involved in. Comparing the result of an adult's Zine to a child's one is a very eye-opening experience and something where different age groups can learn from each other. However, perhaps children who are very young and children with certain disabilities would find this task quite difficult.

2 – GirlsRoar! Drama Workshop

Arguably the probably most popular activity, the drama workshop was very successful. The best part of the workshop was the fact that just like the kids, the adults also got involved in acting as

silly as possible. This interaction was crucial, since normally in most places parents or relatives would sit down and watch. This metaphorically broke an invisible barrier, indicating that once you are no longer a child you can no longer participate in fun activities where you use your body. Another symbolic moment of International Day of the Girl occurred when we were asked to collectively represent the word 'strength'. Instead of using stereotypes, like tensing our muscles or acting like superheroes, we all formed a circle and linked arms. This is a symbol that shows that females of all ages, ethnicities, abilities, classes, etc are stronger together. However, it was a shame that the group was entirely female as the two young boys refused to get involved. Hopefully the reason for that was because they were shy and not because they thought it was just "for girls".

3 - Art with Katherine Gilmartin

This activity was also very successful because it was all about the body, and how we associate ourselves with our bodies. Although putting a dinosaur head with a mermaid's body seemed abstract, it is in fact subconsciously telling us that all bodies are acceptable, no matter what shape, size, colour, ability, etc. A male teenager with a disability got really involved and kept saying how much he loved the activity, which proves its success. It was also an activity that considered bodies without considering sex, which, as we know, tends to define our bodies in today's world.

4 – Make a 'phenakistoscope' Film

The last activity was also very fun and many people got involved. A phenakistoscope was something new that no one had ever seen before. Thus, this event attracted more people as they were curious and intrigued. When you make something that you can take home, you can look back on it and remember that day and the importance of Day of the Girl and the empowerment of girls around the world.

Some of the general observations that made focused on that a very small amount of fathers or male adult attendance at Day of the Girl 2016. Obviously, this is rather disappointing, especially considering it took place on a Saturday – a day where mothers and fathers usually have the day off. We should question this: is it because they refused to come or is it because they felt like they couldn't get involved with any of the activities? Or could it be another reason?

The activities as a whole centered on the creative side of things. This is really important as it expanded everyone's imagination, but on the other hand, it kind of reinforces the stereotype that arty activities are for girls. Perhaps having some more active, sporty or even scientific activities would mean a greater variety and balance of events. The spacious and vibrant venue had lots of different areas to play. It projected a very lively and fun atmosphere. However, although it is easy to access the venue, once you are inside it is different as there are many stairs. Someone with a wheelchair for example would not be able to access certain areas and join in on particular activities, which is a problem as the leaflet for Day of the Girl states that 'Everyone is Welcome!'

An observation that was made was that there were many children on the computers that were placed in the center of the room. This may have distracted both boys and girls, and influenced them to not participate on the Day of the Girls Norwich. Maybe for the next event, if they would take out the distraction of technology with the computers, they would have more active participants. Another interesting observation came from the interaction between the parents and their kids. One example was a mother who had a son and a daughter. Her son climbed the climbing wall and she called him 'strong', 'powerful' and 'a good boy', while leaving her daughter alone in the ball pit. The daughter had lots of fun in the ball pit and her mother kept telling her off and told her to go and draw. This may subconsciously tell the girl that she has to do quiet artistic activities, while her brother can do active activities – creating an immediate separation. Interactions between

parents and their children shows that sometimes parents are a major influence when it comes to the division between genders.

Overall Day of the Girl Norwich was successful in raising awareness of female empowerment and creating activities which relayed this message. In order to raise more awareness, there are a few recommendations that can allow this special and important event to reach its full potential. For example, social media has now become the main way of conveying information to large audiences. In order to make full use of these resources, Day of the Girl Norwich could ensure that all their social media platforms are regularly updated with relevant information. One suggestion is that they reactivate their tumblr account. The current website could also be updated to ensure that the latest events are talked about. Up-to-date media platforms with relevant information about the event in October only improves the exposure of the day. One expansion possibility could be an interactive online forum in order to aid constant interest for the ideas surrounding the event.

The number of visitors to the day could be improved with more advertising and better targeted advertising. A possibility would be strengthening current connections with local schools so they can raise awareness of the event amongst their students. As well as this partners such as the local Girl Guides groups, which as an organization has been describes as "the ultimate feminist organization"[1] seem like an obvious group to target with advertisements in relation to day of the girl. Local parenting groups could also be potential advertising venues, as most of the visitors to the event were accompanied by their parent. Therefore, parent outreach could create a larger and more diverse group of participants. Leaflets distribution will help, but also with

members of the organization conduct information sessions will also make sure as many potential visitors are aware of the event.

This rethinking of the advertising strategy could translate into the event reaching a wider range of audience than it has done previously. This would mean activities carried out on the day would need to appeal to wider age range. It could be argued that the activities on offer were aimed at a specific age range and may not appeal, for example to teenagers as much, activities for example with a technological aspect would be an interesting addition.

A multi-cultural aspect could also be brought into Day of the Girl, with the aim of raising awareness of issues that affect a wider range of races and ethnicities. This could be achieved with a wider range of activities stemming from different cultural backgrounds, which may aid in attracting a more diverse range of visitors, as they may feel the event is more relevant to their experiences of 'being a girl'.

To help inspire visitors to the event maybe inviting people who embody the aim of "day of the girl"; such as successful women who have various achievements in different fields in order to help inspire girls and show the range of opportunities they can actually achieve.

Overall, to improve on the 2016 Day of the Girl event the, main objective should aim to attract a larger and more diverse audience. With slight modifications, the organizers should be able to achieve this feasible goal. Ultimately, this will in turn enable Day of the Girl Norwich to reach its full potential.

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[1] <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article3600287.ece>