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MAD week projects.

Make A Difference Week is a project run by OCVA (Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action) which they piloted in 2016 at Bartholomew School, Eynsham. The idea was to bring together young volunteers and organisations for a week of work experience, volunteering, learning, and fun. The project was an outstanding success and has grown over the years. This year OCVA will be working with a number of other schools and will be helping Larkmead School in Abingdon to pilot the project with their students. If you are interested in hosting Larkmead's year 12 students for MAD week, please contact OCVA.

One of the organisations that hosted the students last year was the Thame Players. The Players were delighted to show four students from Bartholomew School around the Players Theatre on Tuesday 9th July.

The four students, Roman Harris, Hugh O'Neill, Libby Partlett and Owen Batts, were shown round the theatre by Rod Snowdon and Helen Johns of Thame Players and had a sneak preview of the set for *Cut!*, opening later that day. Rod told them about the extensive preparation, from rehearsals to set building and arranging props, that goes into a Thame Players production for weeks ahead of the opening night. Helen told them about the variety of shows that Thame Players put on, including serious drama, musical acts and comedy, and film screenings from Thame Cinema for All. She also gave them a bit of historical background on how Thame Players began 75 years ago, and how the group came to be in the modern, well-appointed theatre they own and run today. Later on, the students also had a chance to meet and hear Tony Long and Brian Holt talk about their years of experience with the theatre.

As part of their theatre task, the students were asked to write articles, take photographs and develop publicity materials for the organisations they visited. These will form part of a broadcast feature on Lilley Mitchell's afternoon show on BBC Radio Oxford on Thursday 11th July. Some of the pictures Owen Batts took appear alongside this article.

The students said they were fascinated by everything they saw and heard, and they were amazed by the level of detail that goes into a production. They felt their visit gave them a much better idea of how much goes on behind the scenes and how it all comes together. They were also struck by the calm and soothing atmosphere in the theatre, which they thought would be very different to how it would be when a show was on and being performed to a live audience! Naturally, they were invited to come back and see *Cut!* during its run, when they really would be able to appreciate the difference in atmosphere!

One of the students, Libby Partlett, did return the same evening with her mother and saw *Cut!* on its first night. She said afterwards, 'We really enjoyed the show and everyone was so nice and welcoming. Vicar Acorn and Mrs Travesty were the stand-out characters for me - really funny. Also I thought the detective pair had some great moments and acted really comedically. It has been a fantastic experience and one we'll always remember'.

For the July 2020 MAD week, OCVA are looking for a small, select number of organisations that will be able to benefit from the support that these students can bring them. They are looking for organisation based, or have opportunities in **Abingdon**, Berinsfield and the surrounding area. However, they will consider other areas with good transport links for students including the city of Oxford.

For more information on the scheme please visit <https://ocva.org.uk/i-want-to-volunteer/m-a-d-make-a-difference-week-july-2018/> and see video's of past projects undertaken by MAD students . Alternatively please contact Tariq Khader at vol@ocva.org.uk or Tel: 01865 251946