

# Standing room only at Keighley event

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Coach Alan Pearson with one of the visitors to the event

An open day and evening event held at Keighley Table Tennis and Recreation Centre last weekend was such a runaway success that extra chairs and tables had to be fetched.

More than 170 table tennis enthusiasts aged from five to 85 turned up to share their enjoyment of the sport – there had never been so many people in the centre since it opened in 2009.

Head Coach Andy Bray said: "This is a huge number for the table tennis community and shows how enthusiasm for the sport is growing in Keighley."

The race night, the centre's biggest annual event, raised a record £1,500 in funds, a sum much needed by the centre and its resident club, Haworth Hawks, so that they may continue to provide low cost competitive, social and coaching table tennis opportunities for the people of Keighley and the surrounding area.

Some of the money will be spent on improvements to the centre itself, and some will go towards the purchase of a new robot training machine.

Haworth Hawks, which this year retained its 4-star Premier Club rating from Table Tennis England is fully self-supporting, as is Keighley Table Tennis and Recreation Centre.

One member is currently running an auction of promises in a further bid to raise funds, and a home-grown pumpkin was auctioned off on Race Night.

There are still plenty of items to bid for at the website [AuctionofPromises.com](http://AuctionofPromises.com) (key the name 'Haworth Hawks' into the search option), including table tennis coaching sessions from top coach John Ainley, a Burnley shirt signed by the current Barclays Premier League side, table tennis bats signed by the England squad, a fishing day, fitness class vouchers for Keighley Leisure Centre and a toaster kindly donated by Sainsbury's.

The main focus of the centre is, of course, table tennis, but the camaraderie between players, especially at the ever-popular over-50's sessions, acts as an unofficial morale booster for many. Several of the club's players are currently struggling with serious health issues, and find the sessions a great 'normaliser'.

Colleen Henderson-Heywood, whose father, Colonel Henderson, died on October 6, found this aspect of the centre so positive that she made a generous donation of £150 at the weekend.

Currently living in Scotland, she had spent 12 weeks in Haworth caring for her father before his death. She said: "The last few weeks of caring for him became very tough and if it hadn't been for the Centre I would have struggled more than I did. Being able to come and play, to forget just for a moment was priceless."

The Keighley League is now a month into the 2014/15 season, with 40 league teams battling it out each week for the top position in 4 divisions.

The table tennis centre will host several school competitions in the build up to Christmas and is looking forward to another successful year.

**Andy Bray**

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