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No question is too silly at the Ruthin Repair Café

Alix Nicholls

IT'S almost time for people in the Vale of Clwyd to see if they can get their much-loved items repaired.

The next Ruthin Repair Café is scheduled to take place on Saturday, July 2.

Alix Nicholls, 17, from Ruthin, is earning a reputation for technical knowledge and friendly advice when people arrive with crashed computers or faulty phones at the repair café at the Naylor Leyland Centre on Well Street.

The free repair café is hosted by Ruthin Friends of the Earth on the first Saturday of each month, and Alix is one of the fixers and practical problem solvers who, together, try to solve and repair all kind of household items.

Whereas other fixers work on broken kitchen utensils, jewellery, clothing, bicycles, garden tools and musical instruments, Alix applies a seemingly inexhaustible youthful energy to sorting software problems with mobile phones, tablets and computers.

The Year 12 Ysgol Brynhyfryd student is studying A-levels in maths, further maths, computer science and sociology, which seem to be a good combination when it comes to helping people from all walks of life who come through the door full of frustrations over their sickly smartphones and limping laptops.

Sometimes it is a matter of updating software or getting rid of unnecessarily big system files.

But, often, it is a matter of just sitting with the person, talking through what is causing difficulties, and making life a littler bit easier by setting up an email group or showing how an app works.

READ: They're certainly in tune at Ruthin Repair Cafe!

“No question is too silly,” says Alix. “Don’t be afraid to ask.”

Alix has serious sights set on the University of Bath, but in the meantime is participating in a scholars outreach programme at the University of Reading, culminating in a residential programme in July, with a special interest in mathematical modelling.

“One of my lecturers gave some advice that I found especially useful,” says Alix, laughing. “Problems should be intriguing and fun to solve, not annoying or irritating.

"He used to bring a rubber duck into lectures. When he saw anyone floundering with a really challenging question, he would hold it up and say: ‘Explain it to the duck!’

"Now, if I’m struggling to explain a really complex issue, I take a deep breath, picture him, and explain it to the duck!”

For anyone who would like to ask Alix for help with problems on their smartphone, laptop or tablet, or just drop in for tea, coffee, cake and a chat. The next Ruthin Repair Café is at the Naylor Leyland Centre on Saturday, July 2 (10.45am–1.30pm).

Alix added: "If we can repair or update faulty software instead of throwing electronics away, or at least if we recycle it, then we are acting responsibly."