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Thank you



to all our 140 volunteers who willingly give up their time each week to help out with a range of activities.

The organisation could not exist without their support so it was lovely to be able to say thank you and to treat them to a day of pampering and relaxation at the Riverside Club during Volunteers' Week.

The work of our volunteers and the families they support can be seen in our new case studies which you can read on our website.

Finally, a request to everyone: please support the Changing Places campaign to ensure accessible toilets are available across South West Herts (see page 9).

Jane Pattinson

Jane Pattinson
Director

Actor visits Children's Centre

Actor Warren Clarke joined in the fun and games when he visited Watford Mencap's Children's Centre – as you can see from our photograph.

Placid Gonzales, Senior Partner at St. James's Place Wealth Management also visited as he sponsored Warren Clarke's Celebrity Golf Day in aid of the Children's Centre.

Mr Gonzales, who played golf with the children, said: "This is really important for local families. I am bowled over by the staff's enthusiasm, and the children are clearly having a good time."



Key points

Actor Warren Clarke visited Watford Mencap's Children's Centre recently.

Mr Clarke held a Celebrity Golf Day on 8 July to raise money for Watford Mencap.

Businessman Placid Gonzales, Senior Partner at St. James's Place Wealth Management also visited the centre.

St. James's Place Wealth Management was the main sponsor for Warren Clarke's Celebrity Golf Day.

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Fun on the canals

Friends from Leisure Together Hertsmere enjoyed a fun day out on the canals.

The trip, which started out at Nash Mills, saw everyone have a go at steering, open the locks and watch the wildlife as they passed by.

Damien Dorsett is pictured opening one of the locks.



Live your life your way

People with learning disabilities have been telling us how their lives could be improved.

Over the past few months the members of our Involvement Group have been talking about some of the issues that affect their lives and make it hard for them to get out.

As you know, Watford Mencap is working hard to give people with learning disabilities and their families greater say on how money is spent on services in Hertfordshire.

Kathryn White, Development Manager, Personalisation, Individualised Funding and Supported Living, said: "We were surprised to find out that very few of the group had ever arranged to go out together. They only really met up when they went to organised events. When we talked about why people didn't see their friends more often, it became clear that communication is a real issue."

Although everyone in the group has a phone, most are not comfortable using it, except in emergencies or to speak to family. Also, members of the group said they found it hard

to make new friends and join community activities. Like all of us, they feel nervous about joining a local group or interest club.

Kathryn added: "We hope that Personal Budgets will give people more opportunities to form friendships and be part of their community. Having the option to pool some of their budget, and employ a personal assistant to help them meet up and enjoy social and leisure activities, could make a real difference."

> Involving People is a new newsletter for learning disability carers. For more information please call its Editor Jo Willis on 01992 586969 or email jo.willis@carersinherts.org.uk

Key points

People with learning disabilities have been telling us how their lives could be improved.

Personal Budgets will give people with learning disabilities more opportunities.

Volunteers' Day at the Riverside Club

Watford Mencap marked national Volunteers' Week with a big thank you to volunteers who enjoyed a day at the prestigious Esporta Riverside Health and Racquets Club in Northwood.

The club threw open its doors to allow volunteers free use of its exercise classes, gym, pools, jacuzzi, sauna, lounges and badminton courts. Beauty treatments, lunch and dinner were also laid on.

Anne-Marie Kesselman, communications volunteer at Watford Mencap Head Office, said: "It has been an absolutely splendid day. I feel very privileged to be able to enjoy the Riverside and it's a nice way for the charity to say Thank You."

Anne-Marie has been assisting the Watford Mencap fundraising team in developing case studies, writing press releases and using her publishing skills. She added: "I would strongly suggest to other people looking for work that they volunteer one or two days a week. It keeps your skills fresh and you can make new friends. I now have a new job and am really pleased to have been able to support Watford Mencap."

Mark Adams, Membership Manager at the Riverside, added: "My colleagues and I have seen at first hand the wonderful work carried out by Watford Mencap. We know that without its 140 volunteers, Watford Mencap could not do as much to support people with a learning disability. We are delighted to offer them this opportunity to relax and enjoy themselves for a day."



Volunteer Lyn Prodger pounds the treadmill in the Riverside Club's well equipped gym



Derek Anderson sits back and relaxes in the club's spa

Key points

Volunteers who help Watford Mencap were thanked for their support by enjoying a day at the Esporta Riverside Club in Northwood.

It was during National Volunteers' Week.

Children's Services - Dawn up for top award

Congratulations to Dawn Owen, Deputy Manager of our Children's Services, who has been shortlisted for the Herts Playworker of the Year awards.

Dawn, 25, has worked with children and young people with disabilities for over 10 years, but has recently resigned from her position at the Children's Centre. She will be leaving at the end of term. Her role included sharing responsibility for the After School Club, leading playschemes as well as developing the Youth Club and transition services.

Highly skilled, Dawn treated each child as an individual and encouraged them to stretch themselves. She has also been an advocate for families who have difficulty accessing services. We are sorry that Dawn is leaving Watford Mencap, and wish her all the best for the future.

> There has been a fantastic response to Children's Centre Manager Ro Linton's blog in the Watford Observer. You can read it at www.watfordobserver.co.uk/yoursay/features/rolinton/

and while you're there, why not check out the Watford Mencap page at www.watfordobserver.co.uk/communityinfo/charity/mencap/



Dawn is pictured having fun with one of her young charges

Key points

Dawn Owen, Deputy Manager of Children's Services, has been shortlisted for the Herts Playworker of the Year awards, but is leaving Watford Mencap. We wish her well.

Young People of the Year awards

Three pupils at Watford Grammar School for Boys have received official recognition for their sterling work for Watford Mencap.

Tom Smith, Manish Fatania and Muhammad Jaffer were shortlisted in the Citygate Young People of the Year awards which has a top prize of £1,000. The contest rewards young people from Hertfordshire who give to others and are positive role models.

In particular, Tom, Manish and Muhammad have helped with our Hand in Hand Youth Club.

Key points

3 pupils from Watford Grammar School for Boys were shortlisted in the Hertfordshire Young People of the Year awards for their brilliant work with Watford Mencap.



Photo: Tony Middleton Muhammad, Tom and Manish at the awards

Watford Mencap launches case studies

As someone who reads this magazine, the chances are you already have an understanding of the essential work Watford Mencap does for people with learning disabilities and their carers.

We know that Watford Mencap touches the lives of all sorts of people with different needs and varying disabilities – but it can sometimes be difficult to explain the diverse nature of our work.

The great news is that we can now, thanks to John Lewis's sponsorship, provide interested parties with a comprehensive set of case studies which capture the essence of what we do.

These case studies can be sent to companies, individuals and organisations who show an interest in supporting our charity with voluntary work, grants or donations.

Watford Mencap is affiliated to national Mencap but receives no funding from them and relies heavily on local authority funding, local corporate support and community donations.

The 9 case studies were launched at a special event to celebrate the people and organisations who support our work. Among those attending the event at John Lewis in Watford were Watford Mayor Dorothy Thornhill and numerous Watford Mencap supporters.

David Green, Operations Manager, Fashion, at John Lewis Watford, welcomed visitors who listened intently to a series of speakers including Jenny Young, the mother of a child with a learning disability.

Jenny, who features in the case studies along with her son (who is pictured on our front cover), spoke about the fun her son has at our Children's Centre and what the respite means for her and the rest of the family.

Veronica Chamberlain, Watford Mencap's Funding & Business Development Manager, said: "We hope that these studies will inspire others to follow in the footsteps of those people and organisations who have been so generous. Without their support we could not continue to do our work."



Local dignitaries and supporters attended the launch of Watford Mencap's case studies



Florrie Amans (left) chats to Catherine Suttle (centre) from Hertfordshire County Council and Watford Mencap's Ruth Murray



Michael Stevens, General Manager of the Harlequin Centre in Watford, was interested to discover that Janaki Putcha was interviewed for one of our case studies

Photos: SKM Photographic Studio

Key points

Watford Mencap has launched 9 case studies which tell the stories of some of the people who support our charity.

We will be able to send these case studies to people who are interested in supporting us in the future.

Thanks to

- Albert Hunt Trust** - for After-School Club £3,000
- Awards for All** - for IT equipment £7,114
- Barclays Bank** - match funding for money raised at Leisure Together Disco £628
- Blaser Mills** - Pancake Race sponsorship £55
- Camelot Group plc** - Watford 10k sponsorship £3,000
- Chorleywood Golf Club, Ladies** - £900
- Bob Gasper** - £20
- Linda Hall** - Watford 10k sponsorship £100
- The Harlequin** - gift vouchers for Watford 10K £100
- Help a London Child** - £1,548
- Hertsmere Council** - collection tins £170
- Hertsmere Council** - contribution to new laptop £1,500
- John Lewis Watford** - Pancake Race sponsorship £242; hosting of case studies launch
- Mrs Lipson** - for After School Club £250
- Hannah Mills** - Watford 10K sponsorship £37
- Our Lady Help of Christians, Rickmansworth** - collection £18
- Queens School** - Choral Competition £55
- Radlett Junior Squash Club** - £122
- Craig Rennie** - £100
- Rickmansworth Society** - £75
- Sigma Pharmaceuticals** - 2008 Big Herts Walk proceeds £8,000
- Sponsorship for Stuart and Cherry Marshall** - £125
- Three Rivers DC** - for PAT testing equipment £250
- VocaLink** - match funding for sponsorship money from Pancake Race £270

- Watford Borough Council Annual Fund** - for Leisure Together £2,205
 - Watford 10k** - Justgiving sponsorship £1,740
- In Kind**
- Sally Ashley-Cound** - photographer
 - Peter Bennett** - Hertsmere Leisure Together Tai Chi lessons
 - CBJ Digital** - reduced price for our website
 - Peter Crane** - donation of toys to the Children's Centre
 - Sarah Kitt** - editor of In Touch
 - Lisa Morris** - Hertsmere Leisure Together Yoga sessions
 - The Riverside Esporta Health Club** - for collecting Easter Eggs for the children, hosting Volunteers' Day, providing fruit, warm-up and vouchers at the Watford 10K, and hosting Leisure Together Sports Day
 - SKM Photography Studio** - for photos at the case studies launch
 - Sandra Spragg** - donation of games to the Children's Centre
 - Sussex Sport Photography** - Watford 10k photography
 - Three Rivers District Council**
 - Waitrose Rickmansworth** - for use of their training room
 - Watford Grammar School for Girls**
 - Watford Grammar School for Boys**
 - Watford Round Table** - for organising the Watford 10k

A big thanks also to everyone who donated along with their membership.



Big Herts Walk

The Big Herts Walk will take place at 1pm on Sunday 27 September in Cassiobury Park. Money raised will benefit Watford Mencap, the Peace Hospice and The Watford New Hope Trust. Those taking part in either the 10k or 3k walks will receive a goody bag, certificate and medal, with prizes for the adult and child who raise the most sponsorship. Lunch will also be provided. Registration fees apply. Register on-line at www.bighertswalk.org.uk or call Lesley on 01923 713622

Changing Places, Changing Lives

No one should have to change a family member on a dirty toilet floor.

Most of us don't give visiting public buildings a second thought. But many disabled people are unable to take part in activities we may take for granted because standard accessible toilets do not meet their needs.

Watford Mencap is campaigning for Changing Places toilets, with a hoist, changing bench and plenty of space.

Currently, apart from the toilet at Watford Mencap Children's Centre, the nearest Changing Places toilet is in Milton Keynes!

Sally Summerton, mother of Sophie who has profound and multiple learning disabilities, said: "My son wants to go to a theme park for the day. For most families this would be a simple and joyful day out, however, for a family with a child with special needs such a day comes with its own unique challenges. I am sure it will be a major problem as there will be no appropriate facilities to change Sophie.

Even places that cater specifically for disabled people will generally only have facilities for people in wheelchairs who are able to move

themselves from chair to toilet, and not for those who need a hoist. Surprisingly even hospitals don't have these facilities."



If you would like to change this situation visit www.mencap.org.uk/ldw

Key points

Watford Mencap is campaigning for more toilets to have hoists, a changing bench and more space.

Many disabled people are unable to take part in activities because public toilets do not meet their needs.

Visit www.mencap.org.uk/ldw

Discounted holidays in a 12th century monastery in rural France are available for carers. The monastery is undergoing some minor renovation work which is why it is being offered at discounted rates. For more information please ring (France) 00 33 (0) 5 49 72 50 34 or email total.tranquillity@hush.com. View more details online at www.totaltranquillity.org

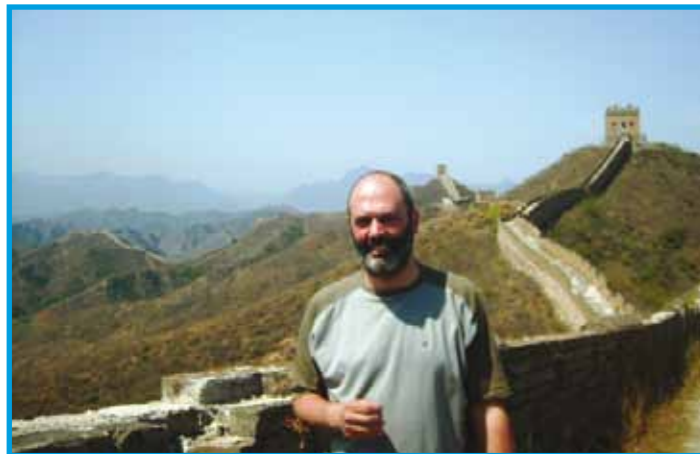
Why not start the summer holidays with a clean house? Our Children's Centre will be

open on Thursday 23 and Friday 24 July for you to hand in your donations of goods for sale in our shops and on eBay. Contact Rose Kreloff on 01923 713627 for further details.

Hand in Hand members Miles Riley and Marc Wildman spent a half day doing work experience with Royal Mencap in Rickmansworth as part of Mencap's Takeover Day project. Miles and Marc dealt with post, emails, filing and visited local banks and shops.

Russell completes China trek

Well done and a big thank you to Russell Lincoln for completing the Great Wall of China Trek in April and raising more than £1,300 for Watford Mencap. Russell, who is pictured on the Great Wall of China, thoroughly enjoyed the experience. He said: "It was all I imagined and more."



Key points
 Russell Lincoln finished his walk along the Great Wall of China.
 He raised more than £1,300 for Watford Mencap.

Help us to make a difference

Please join us as a member of Watford Mencap, a charity which works with people with learning disabilities.

As a member you would elect the Trustees, receive our In Touch magazine and the Annual Review and support our work with local people with a learning disability.

The membership fee is just £5 per annum. Please send back the form inside this edition of In Touch and take out a Standing Order if you can. If you can afford more, please make a donation.

For more information call **01923 713620**
 Thank you!

Key points
 Please renew your membership.
 It costs just £5 per year.
 As a member you get to elect our Trustees.
 You will also receive In Touch and our Annual Review.

Summer Festival fun

Why not come along to a Summer Festival at Westfield Children's Centre, Tolpits Lane, Watford, on Saturday 29 August?

From 12.30 to 3.30pm you can enjoy a family musical workshop, movement and dance, storytelling sessions, facepainting, snacks, play areas and the gardens.

The event is free for users of Up on Downs, Brainwave and Watford Mencap. Just ring

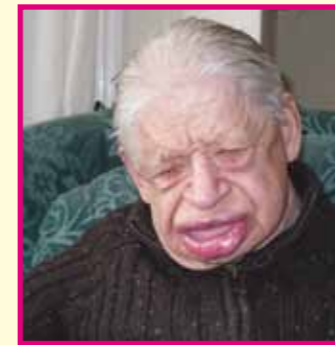
Ceri Collins on 05602 699005 or Sande Nuttall on 01462 630459 to let them know you are attending.

Key points
 Come and enjoy a Summer Festival at Westfield Children's Centre in Watford on Saturday 29 August from 12.30 to 3.30pm.

David Carter and Tony Cotterell



David Carter



Tony Cotterell

It is with sadness that we tell you of the recent passing of 2 of our residential home residents, David Carter and Tony Cotterell.

David, 59, who lived at Homeoaks, passed away on Thursday 2 April after bravely fighting a long illness.

Homeoaks Deputy Manager Martin Ford said: "David was such a big character within our home and he liked nothing more than chatting with everyone he met. Every spring when David's favourite daffodils make an appearance we will always remember him."

We will also miss Tony Cotterell, 79, a resident at Thorpedale, who died on Tuesday 26 May.

Thorpedale Manager Keith Seager said: "Tony had a gentle nature but was also a cheeky character with a wicked sense of humour. He will be missed."

Key points
 It is with sadness that we mark the passing of Homeoaks resident David Carter and Thorpedale resident Tony Cotterell.

It's a fair cop at Watford 10k

The Metropolitan Police provided the winners for the Watford 10k women's and men's races at Cassiobury Park on Monday 4 May.

Competing for the first time in the Watford 10k, Peter Tucker, 28, won in 32 minutes 56 seconds. Peter works for the Met's Lewisham Rapid Response team. In the women's race Sharon McHugh, 33, also a Metropolitan Police officer, won with a personal best of 38 minutes 55 seconds.

The event was organised by Watford Round Table to raise money for charities including Watford Mencap. Together we cheered on all the runners including Hannah Miles, a social work student on placement with Watford Mencap, Leisure Together member Tom Witherow, Hand in Hand youth club member Marc Chimenti, and Felix Gluck and Aisha Lilley from our Children's Centre.

Our thanks to Gold Sponsor - Camelot, operator of the national Lottery - and to our other sponsors, Up and Running, Esporta Northwood and the Harlequin Centre, Watford. Thank you also to all the volunteers!

For full results and photos visit www.watford10k.org.uk



Tom Witherow

Key points
 The Watford 10k fun run raised money for Watford Mencap.
 Find out who the winners were on the day.



Ask
Ruth

Dear Watford Mencap

My daughter is 17 and has quite complex needs. I have been told that she needs to have an operation but, following the recent reports in the news about the treatment people with learning disabilities sometimes receive, I am really concerned. Is there anything I can do to make sure she is safe and well cared for while she is in hospital?

Having any medical treatment can be worrying and, following recent reports, I can understand your concerns. However, Hertfordshire are trying to make people's experiences better with the introduction of Health Facilitation Nurses for people with learning disabilities. They offer support within all Hertfordshire hospitals when a person with a learning disability is attending for treatment or admitted to a ward. The nurses are specialists in learning disabilities so can help staff to plan and support people to have a positive experience while in hospital.

They can be contacted on 01727 834785 or by email to apl@hertspartsft.nhs.uk when someone is admitted to hospital or you can contact the Advice & Advocacy Service for help on 01923 713620 advice@watfordmencap.org.uk

What do you think?

If you have some news which you would like to include in In Touch, please contact our Editor Sarah Kitt on 07747 805123 or email her at sarah.kitt@ntlworld.com

Talent Corner

This lovely photograph was taken by Annette Timms who joined Watford Leisure Together's IT Group in practising their digital photography skills at Cheslyn Gardens in Watford.

Adrian O'Brien has placed a number of Leisure Together's photos on the Kodak online gallery. To view his pictures please follow this link: http://www.kodakgallery.co.uk/ShareLanding.action?c=2fg75q9d5.jcgr7ucp&x=0&y=-qjddq4&localeid=en_GB



Watford Mencap Training News

Watford Mencap has received substantial training funding from Hertfordshire PVI Workforce Development Partnership. As a result we have, since March, already run 20 in-house training courses amounting to over 200 training opportunities for staff development. Future training dates include safeguarding adults (20 July), safeguarding children (28 July), challenging behaviour (3 August), personal safety (3 August) and risk assessment (12 October).



Watford Mencap's 2009 Annual General Meeting will take place on Tuesday 6 October at the Watersmeet, Rickmansworth, at 7pm for 7.30pm. Everyone is welcome.