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## Welcome!



Watford Mencap has received an excellent rating for our residential home, Homeoaks in South Oxhey. Well done to Coral Brooke and all her staff for their dedication. This is the first time one of our residential homes has achieved this rating and they join our Community Support Service in this elite category.

We know that some families are already suffering in the recession and that we must keep our services going to support them. Please see our centre pages for ideas on beating the credit crunch and maintaining Watford Mencap's services.

Watford Mencap is always glad to celebrate the achievements of local people with a learning disability, so is also pleased to feature the children of Colnbrook School who sang 'Carmina Burana', Sylvia Hatch who went to Australia by herself and the Leisure Together members who learned to use Facebook in our IT class.

*Jane Pattinson*

Jane Pattinson  
Director

## Failure to meet health needs of people with learning disabilities

Investigators say the NHS and social services in England are failing to meet the health needs of people with learning disabilities.

The Health Service and Local Government Ombudsmen reviewed the deaths of 6 people with a learning disability which were highlighted in Mencap's Death by Indifference report.

The Health Ombudsman's report revealed 'significant and distressing failures' in health and social care services. People with a learning disability experienced 'prolonged suffering and poor care.'

"The quality of care in the NHS and social services for people with learning disabilities is at best patchy and at worst an indictment of our society," said Health Ombudsman Ann Abraham.

The government has promised to improve training and carry out a full inquiry into premature deaths among people with learning disabilities.

Care services minister Phil Hope said: "Preventable deaths of people with learning disabilities are absolutely unacceptable."

Mencap Chief Executive Mark Goldring added: "Although the reports are a big step forward for people with a learning disability, it is not the end of the journey for all the families. We will continue to fight for justice for the families."

## How do you want to live your life?

Watford Mencap has been awarded funding to progress our work in giving people with learning disabilities and their families a greater say on how money is spent on services in Hertfordshire.

The grant from the Joint Commissioning Team - which is funded by Hertfordshire County Council and Primary Care Trust - means Watford Mencap is now a lead partner in the Strengthening User and Carer Involvement pilot project.

Our New Solutions team will co-ordinate local activities specifically for South West Hertfordshire so we can consult with people with learning disabilities. This will give us a greater understanding of how they want to be supported to live their lives, and how they would like health and social care funding to be spent.

Kathryn White, Development Manager, Personalisation, Individualised Funding and Supported Living, said: "We recognise that people with learning disabilities and their carers can face many barriers to involvement. We are working to promote full equality of opportunity so that people can participate meaningfully in consultation activities, with the level of involvement that they choose."

Jan Gates of the Joint Commissioning Team added: "Together we plan to come up with some innovative new ways of how we can work with people and give them the opportunity to influence where money is spent on services in social care and in health care."

The aim is to draw up proposals on a way forward by the end of the year.

Contact Kathryn White on 01923 713628 or email [kwhite@watfordmencap.org.uk](mailto:kwhite@watfordmencap.org.uk)

## Have a go at sailing!



*Come sailing with Colne Valley Special Sailors*

The Colne Valley Special Sailors meet on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays in the summer months at Rickmansworth Aquadrome.

This is an exciting opportunity for anyone with a disability to come and discover if they enjoy the freedom of sailing alone or with someone else. Each session lasts for 1 hour. Annual membership fee is £20. Taster sessions are free.

The safety of our sailors is essential. Our boats are designed with safety in mind and a hoist is available, if required. The boats are also easy to sail by using an electric switch for finger or chin. Experienced volunteers are on hand as well as a safety boat nearby and life jackets are provided.

To find out more about sailing, head along to the group's Open Day at Rickmansworth Aquadrome on Saturday 2 May from 10.30am to 3.30pm, or call Sue Weller on 01923 255354

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## Ready, steady, flip!



### Runners get off to a flying start in our Pancake Race

A record 15 teams took part in this year's Pancake Race, helping to raise more than £1,500 for Watford Mencap.

The teams raced through the centre of Rickmansworth - flipping their pancakes as they ran! Congratulations to the lads from Rickmansworth School who 'battered' teams from Gibbs Gillespie and the Coach and Horses to take first place in the final heat!

Well done also to Daniel Stubbington, pictured second from left, and Annette Timms who

raced for the first time this year. Daniel and Annette, who both have a learning disability, are hoping to enter again next year.

Annette said: "The pancake race was a good opportunity for me to join in with the other runners," while Daniel added: "It was good fun!"

Our thanks to the Coach and Horses for, once again, sponsoring this popular event and to the Chairman of Three Rivers District Council, Chris Lloyd, for officiating.



### Stuart and Cherry Marshall prepare for their mammoth tandem ride

## A bicycle made for 2!

It will be pedal power all the way for Stuart and Cherry Marshall who plan to cycle from Lands End to John O'Groats to raise money for Watford Mencap.

The intrepid cyclists plan to donate £1 for each mile they cycle - the trip is nearly 1,000 miles long - as well as generously offering to match the amount they receive in sponsorship.

Cherry has a long association with Watford Mencap which has supported her brother Nigel who uses our services. If you would like to sponsor the Marshalls, you can donate on line at [www.justgiving.co.uk/le2jogtandem](http://www.justgiving.co.uk/le2jogtandem)

## Excellent rating for Homeoaks team



### Susan Tavener enjoys a spot of cooking at the 'excellent' Homeoaks

Congratulations to the Homeoaks team for receiving a 3 star excellent rating as a result of their recent Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI).

Manager Coral Brooke said: "I feel proud of the whole team's achievement in being awarded a 3 star CSCI rating. It recognises the hard work, support and dedication by all of the staff at Homeoaks."

Resident Susan Tavener said she enjoys living at Homeoaks because she is able to help with the cooking and shopping, and can live in the same house as her friends.

A copy of the report can be viewed at [www.csci.org.uk](http://www.csci.org.uk)

### Activity scheme is 10 years old

The College Holiday Activity Scheme will be 10 years old this summer. Were you one of its members in 1999 or do you know anyone who was? Do you have any memories you would like to tell us about? If so please contact David Trill on 07796 264839

### Sat-nav donation

Road journeys are much simpler for our Homeoaks residents, thanks to the donation of an in-car satellite navigation system from Gowrings Mobility. The BB Nav is particularly useful because it indicates Blue Badge parking areas for people with disabilities. The equipment has already been put to good use on a trip to the Isle of Wight.

Visit [www.gowringmobility.co.uk](http://www.gowringmobility.co.uk)

### Colnbrook's singing sensations

Congratulations to Amy Bone and Sibel Aykam of Colnbrook School, South Oxhey, who sang choruses of Carmina Burana in Latin at Merchant Taylors' School in Northwood on 30 March. They were part of a South Oxhey children's choir, coached by Gareth Malone, being filmed by the BBC.

### Summer Festival fun

A Summer Festival will be held at Westfield Children Centre, Tolpits Lane, Watford, on Saturday 29 August from 12.30 to 3.30pm. Family, helpers and friends are welcome to join in the fun which includes dance, stories and songs, plus face painting, raffle and games. If you would like to attend, please contact Ceri Collins on 05602 699005 or via email at [cericollins@brainwave.org.uk](mailto:cericollins@brainwave.org.uk)

# It's the credit crunch

## - what can we do?

Local firms are cutting back on staff and people we know are losing their jobs. Watford Mencap is feeling the pinch as business sponsors pull out, and donors find it hard to maintain their giving.

However the needs of people with a learning disability and their families have not gone away. Our services have never been more necessary.

### How can we help families?

- Our Advice and Advocacy Service can help you with benefits and other financial problems
- We provide respite through our Leisure Together, Children's and Community Support Services, relieving stress and helping carers continue working (see opposite: Helping Carers into Work)
- We subsidise support - for example a play scheme place costs us £58 per day, but we only charge £15
- We provide volunteering opportunities as a stepping-stone to work, or a chance to develop new skills after redundancy
- We can advise on Individual Budgets through our New Solutions service

### How can you help Watford Mencap to keep going?

- Pay your invoices promptly
- Take part in or support our events, such as the Watford 10k, which help pay for services - or organise your own event with friends
- Ask your employer to choose us as Charity of the Year, to sponsor a children's outing or an event



**Lyn Fear and Adam Wild joined other Leisure Together members for a singalong at the Merchant Taylors' School fun day, offering respite for families**

- Set up a Justgiving site to raise money when you celebrate a birthday or anniversary
- Become a Watford Mencap ambassador - take our DVD to your faith or community group and tell them about us
- Collect goods for us to sell on eBay or in our shops
- Give your time as a volunteer - we need professional skills too!

## Helping carers into work



Help is at hand for carers in Hertfordshire who find it difficult to break into the work market.

The Carers into Learning and Work Service offers information, advice and guidance to carers on everything from courses, job applications and interviews.

A number of agencies have worked together to develop this new service which recognises how difficult it can be for carers to access paid work and avenues of learning.

To contact Watford Mencap phone:

**Advice & Advocacy**

01923 713632

**Community Support**

01923 713621

**Children's Services**

01923 220816

**Fundraising**

01923 713637

**Leisure Together Hertsmere**

01923 713635

**Leisure Together Watford & Three Rivers**

01923 713634

Email: [enquiries@watfordmencap.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@watfordmencap.org.uk)

Now, for the first time, carers have a single, speedy route to help them explore their learning or work options. This service is available to any carer or former carer who lives in Hertfordshire and cares for a child or adult. The level of care you provide does not have to be substantial or regular.

To contact this service call:

**Freephone 0800 587 4103**

## Join our team & make a difference

We have vacancies in our Care Homes and Community Services Team.

Full time / part time contracts are available. This will include weekend and evening work and night shifts in the Care Homes.

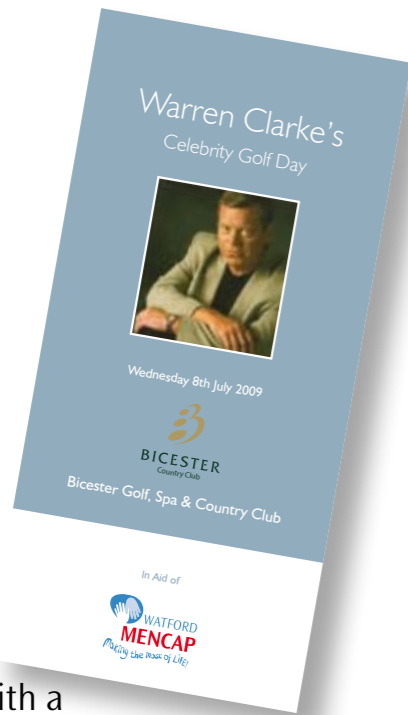
We are also looking to increase our bank of casual workers to work across all projects on a flexible basis, covering holidays, training and sickness.

All posts are subject to enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau, including POVA and POCAL checks.

Please see our website for further details of current vacancies: [www.watfordmencap.org.uk](http://www.watfordmencap.org.uk) All enquires to Jo Warburton on 01923 713623

Watford Mencap welcomes applications from all sections of the community.

# Actor Warren Clarke will be hosting a Celebrity Golf Day in aid of Watford Mencap Children's Centre on 8 July



Golfers can enjoy 18 holes of golf with a celebrity, followed by a 2-course dinner, and entertainment with a comedian and live band.

The event will be held at the Bicester Golf, Spa & Country Club. Entry costs £450 for a team of 3 people. This is an ideal opportunity to entertain clients, bond with colleagues or to relax with friends.

Non-golfers can enjoy the dinner and entertainment for just £40 or add in a day of pampering for £100 per person.

For more information please contact Sarah Bridgeworth via email at [sarah@deliverevents.co.uk](mailto:sarah@deliverevents.co.uk)



## Thanks to...

Arbor Ventures - laptop and server  
 Baily Thomas Charitable Fund - £10,000  
 Waitrose Rickmansworth - use of training room and sponsorship money for the Pancake Race - £96  
 CBJ Digital - reduced-cost website  
 Baker Tilly - £33 for glo-lights and £275 sponsorship from Pancake Race  
 Marijo Hairdressers - £150  
 John Lewis - aquavac, washing machine, £250 to sponsor case studies  
 Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital - £18  
 Kanta and Kishor Pindolia - £100  
 Nabs and Nick Lilley - £26  
 Alex Klemin - Watford FC season ticket for person with a learning disability and carer  
 Mrs G Murray - coffee morning which raised £15  
 Mrs Olive Rowe - £15  
 Watford Grammar School for Girls - weekly use of IT suite  
 Royal British Legion - use of their hall for quiz evening  
 Wilkinsons - £10 voucher  
 Radlett Junior Squash Club - £105  
 Mrs Crowson - £15  
 Mark Roberts - £167  
 Virtual Surveys Ltd - £100 John Lewis vouchers  
 Costco - various goods for our Children's Centre and for selling on eBay  
 Walsingham - £109  
 Camelot call centre - £100  
 Coach and Horses - sponsoring the Pancake Race  
 All teams who took part in the Pancake Race  
 Three Rivers District Council Development Control - £45 sponsorship for Pancake Race  
 Gowrings - BB Sat Nav worth £205  
 Involving People, Hertfordshire County Council - £12,083  
 Youth Opportunities - £10,832  
 Childwick Trust - £500  
 Garfield Weston - £10,000  
 Leisure Together disco - £628

We also received two anonymous donations of £100. Thank you! A big thanks also to everyone who donated along with their membership.

## Try out a new sport for free



An exciting 1-day event will give people with a learning disability the chance to try out a new sport and meet famous people from the world of sport.

The Serious About Sport event will be held from 10am to 3.30pm on Sunday 7 June at the Millennium Arena, East Carriage Drive, Battersea Park, Albert Bridge Road, in London.

The event is free and offers 45 minute taster sessions in tennis, netball, judo, tag rugby, athletics and climbing for anyone aged over 8 with a learning disability. Sports coaches will be on hand to show you what to do and you will also get to meet Special Olympic athletes and hear all about the Paralympic Games from a competitor.

For more information contact Mark Grainger on 01795 521753 or 07789 720406 or send an email to [mark.grainger@mencap.org.uk](mailto:mark.grainger@mencap.org.uk)

## Leisure Together - IT classes

Leisure Together volunteers have been running IT classes for people with learning disabilities on Saturday mornings.

Congratulations to Barry Bullen, Adrian O'Brien, Annette Timms, James Tetlow, Daniel Stubbington, Clive Joll and Chris Murphy - who is pictured on our front cover - who have learned about

digital photography, email, internet, Skype, Facebook and web cams.

Angela Pickford has also recently joined the group which is run by volunteers Nick Clark, Ed Johnson, Whitney Ward and Daniel Fox.

Thanks also to Watford Grammar School for Girls and Compulatte in Watford for the use of their facilities.

## Do you have model potential?

Mencap's learning disability magazine, Viewpoint, is looking for people aged 18 to 40 to take part in a new photo shoot.

Potential models must have a learning disability. Just send 2 photos of yourself (a head shot and a full length picture) to Helen Burger at Viewpoint, 123 Golden Lane, London. EC1Y 0RT or email them to [Helen.burger@mencap.org.uk](mailto:Helen.burger@mencap.org.uk) no later than 31 May 2009.

Also include your name, age, address and telephone number, plus a short paragraph explaining why you would like your photo taken, what makes you angry and what makes you smile.

We are sorry but photos cannot be returned.



# Family welcomes Sylvia to Oz

## A trip to Madeira

A spring trip to Madeira was enjoyed by Joanne Burgess, Daniel Stubbington, Daniel Barbero and Lisa Christie.

The adventurous foursome were accompanied on their March holiday by Watford Mencap's Special Projects Manager David Trill and Community Support Manager Angela Stuthridge.

This was Joanne's first holiday abroad and she thoroughly enjoyed every second.

"I liked the aeroplane especially going up and coming down," said Joanne (pictured). "I liked being with my friends and the cable car, toboggan and pirate ship were really good. I can't wait to go on holiday again!"



Sylvia Hatch enjoyed a holiday of a lifetime when she visited Australia to see family members.

The trip was made possible after the involvement of Angela Stuthridge and Carol Sadler from Watford Mencap's Community Support team. They helped book the holiday, arrange transfers to and from the airport, sorted out insurance and undertook risk assessments on behalf of Sylvia.

Sylvia, pictured, flew from Heathrow Airport, stopping at Singapore for 2 nights.

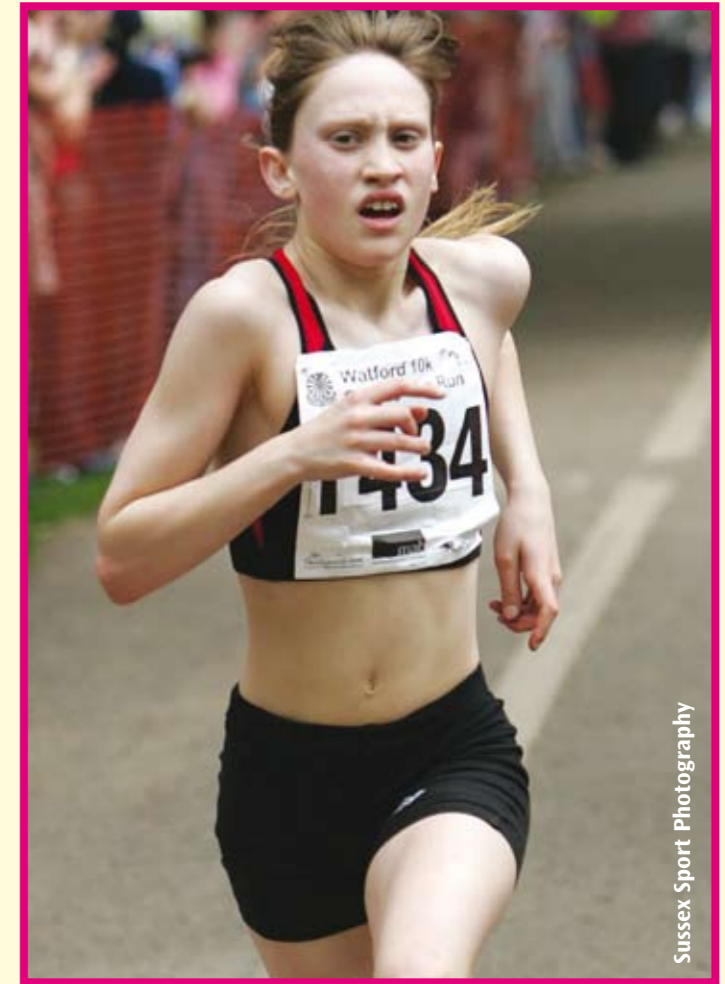
She said: "I went on a coach trip and went to Singapore's Natton Park and also the art centre. I then flew to Sydney to spend a week with my aunt. The weather was beautiful."

Sylvia then travelled to Kind Meadow in Tasmania and stayed with her sister for 6 weeks.

"We went to Tamar Northern Valley, Launceston City, Cataract Gorge, Hayley and Tasmania Park and Tasmania Zoo," said Sylvia. "It was nice to spend time with the family."

The final leg of her tour included a trip to Melbourne before heading back to England.

# Come and run the Watford 10k



The 2009 Watford 10k Charity Fun Run will take place on Bank Holiday Monday 4 May and help raise money for Watford Mencap and Watford Round Table.

The race - which includes 1k and 3k fun runs for juniors - begins at Cassiobury Park in Watford. Camelot will be this year's main sponsors.

Last year's 10k race was won by Nigel Rackham, 46, from Pinner who trains 5 days a week. Nigel, pictured, is a director at Pricewaterhouse Coopers in London and occasionally he will even run home from work!

His advice for anyone thinking of entering this year? "Go for it! I think running is something anyone can do. People shouldn't be scared of entering races. It's not all about elite runners; there are lots of different levels taking part."

Sky Draper, 13, pictured, from Northwood is equally enthusiastic after winning the Watford 3k last year.

Sky, who trains 3 times a week with her coach Bob Parker of Harrow Athletics Club, has also won the London mini-marathon for her age group and is in the final 3 for Young Triathlete of the Year.

She said: "Having a learning disability shouldn't stop people from running and Watford Mencap do a good job in supporting people to do this."

For entry details and sponsorship form, please log on to [www.watford10k.org.uk](http://www.watford10k.org.uk)



## Ask Ruth

### Dear Watford Mencap

**My wife and I live with our son who has a learning disability. We are finding it increasingly difficult to pay all the household bills and have just received our latest Council Tax bill. Is there any help available?**

A household's Council Tax bill is based on at least 2 adults living in a home and it doesn't increase if there are more than 2 adults in the home. However if there is only 1 adult living there the Council Tax is reduced by 25%. This is called the 'Second Adult Rebate.' Certain people are not counted when working out the number of adults who live in your home and this can include people with learning disabilities.

If someone in your household is disabled and needs more space, the disabled band reduction scheme could help you to get a reduction in your Council Tax. If you meet the criteria the banding on your house will be reduced to the level below. If you are on a low income you may qualify for Council Tax Benefit which means that some or all of your Council Tax will be paid.

Contact your local council or the Advice & Advocacy Service for help on 01923 713620 or [advice@watfordmencap.org.uk](mailto: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 01923 775483 or email her at [sarah.kitt@ntlworld.com](mailto:sarah.kitt@ntlworld.com)

## What's your talent?

In Touch would like to feature more people with learning disabilities who have a talent or a success story they would like to share with our readers. If you have an achievement you would like to tell us about, please contact our Editor Sarah Kitt via email at [sarah.kitt@ntlworld.com](mailto:sarah.kitt@ntlworld.com) or call her on 01923 775483 to discuss.

In this edition we focus on talented 20-year-old Dan Jensen who has a passion for writing poetry. Dan lives in sheltered accommodation in Hemel Hempstead and attends college where he is studying creative writing.



Here is one of his poems:

### Summer

Spring comes to the final stages of its life  
The sun is bright and the sky is blue  
and the clouds disappear  
Later hours sunlight  
The flowers come out, yellow and blue  
The weather of hotness  
The sun is shining down on the earth  
with happiness  
Children playing on fields and  
playgrounds and having fun  
As the day come the a close  
people turn in for the night  
They're having the dreams  
Having the dreams  
Having the dreams  
Having the dreams of the day