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Training awards

The achievement of work-related qualifications was formally recognised with an awards ceremony at Watford Mencap's AGM.

Jenny Tomley, MD of John Lewis Watford, presented champagne and chocolates to staff as a thank you for their hard work.

They included:

Fiona O'Brien and Charlotte Windsor - NVQ 2 Health and Social Care

Andrew Carter - NVQ 3 Health and Social Care

Susan Carbott - NVQ 2 Children's Care, Learning and Development

Ricky Allen, Debbie Russell and Ayo Ibitola -

Level 2 Learning Disability Awards Framework (LDAF)

Louise Howey - Level 2 Certificate in Accounting

Jane Pattinson, Rose Kreloff and Russell Lincoln

- NVQ 5 Management

Keith Seager and Angela Stuthridge - NVQ 4

Registered Managers Award

Ruth Murray and Lorraine Barrett -

NVQ 4 Management.



Ayo Ibitola receives champagne and chocolates from Jenny Tomley

Welcome

All of the work that Watford Mencap does involves working with others - whether it be with carers, volunteers, community groups or local companies. With challenging financial times likely to lie ahead during 2009, our partnerships have never been more important to us as an organisation, which is why this issue focuses on partnerships.

Each partnership is different but all bring their rewards, whether it be the wonderful financial support from the John Lewis partnership over the past year, working together and strengthening our relationship with other local charities on the Big Herts Walk or supporting a volunteer to host a coffee morning in her own home for family and friends.

This ongoing support is so valuable to us, as it enables us to continue to raise awareness of the issues faced by local people with learning disabilities and their carers in South West Herts.



Jane Pattinson

Jane Pattinson
Director

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Have more control over your life

In our summer issue we told you of our plan to set up a team to help more people use in Control and individual budgets.

We are delighted to announce that we have now recruited Kathryn White (Development Manager) and Mandy Spray (Project Manager) to take forward our work on personalisation and individualised funding.

Our New Solutions service helps people with learning disabilities and their families decide how they want to be supported to live their life, and spend their social care funding in a way that best suits their needs.

Kathryn said "New Solutions gives you a voice to tell us what you want to change in your life so that you can live the way you choose."

We will work with you to try to make these changes happen and make sure that you have greater choice and control."

The changes you want to make in your life can be as big or as small as you like and you can take as much direct control over your funding and support as you choose. There is no need to worry that you will suddenly be expected to cope with your own budget or have to recruit new staff.

New Solutions also provides information and support to service providers who want to adapt their services to offer greater choice and control and a series of workshops and seminars for local providers are planned for the New Year.

If you would like more information, please contact our New Solutions team on 01923 713628.

Jamming to the sound of music

Members of our Watford Self-Advocacy Group enjoyed a 'jamming' session when they met for a musical evening.

The Watford Mencap group – run by Sandra Ludlow of the Advice and Advocacy Team – decided in advance they would like to talk and learn about music.

Volunteers from the choir at St Lawrence's Church in Abbots Langley gave up their evening to share their knowledge with the group. Everyone discussed their favourite music, enjoyed a music quiz and then picked up some musical instruments for a noisy but fun jamming session – as you can see by our photo!



'Mencap in Hertfordshire'

The topic for this year's annual Mencap in Hertfordshire meeting was housing. The aim was to share key information on the process for finding a home. As a result, all Mencap groups can expect to be sent an overview on the process for finding a home.

Good rating for Thorpedale

Congratulations to all the team at Watford Mencap's Thorpedale residential home which has achieved a Good rating from the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). The inspector said: "The people who live at Thorpedale are well cared for by dedicated well-trained staff."

Trekking round the Great Wall of China

Watford Mencap's Head of Operations Russell Lincoln will be fulfilling a long-time ambition in April 2009 when he treks the Great Wall of China in aid of Watford Mencap.

Every penny raised will go towards supporting young people with learning disabilities.

The trek, which starts in Beijing, involves walking and climbing up to 8 hours a day, following the contours of the mountains.

Russell has already started training for the event – walking up to 4 hours a day, culminating in 2 lots of 8 hour walks. If you would like to sponsor Russell please visit www.justgiving.com/russelllincoln or contact Russell by email at rlincoln@watfordmencap.org.uk or ring 01923 713625. You can also call Watford Mencap's Lesley Blee on 01923 713622.

Festive fun at Christmas tea party

Father Christmas dropped in with a sack of presents to give away to visitors to the Watford Mencap Christmas Tea Party.

150 people attended the fun which was kindly hosted by the Rising Sun Brewers Fayre in Croxley Green, who laid on refreshments including mince pies, tea, coffee and squash.

Entertainment was provided by magician James Tetlow, as well as a raffle and a name the teddy

competition (with teddy Barney kindly donated by John Lewis Watford).

Guests included Watford Borough Councillor Tony Poole and his wife Sylvia. Thanks also to John Whatling and Linda for their contribution.

This young boy and his mum were among 150 guests who enjoyed the festivities at the Watford Mencap Christmas Tea Party



Big Herts Walk success

This year's Big Herts Walk in Cassiobury Park was a big success with 350 people taking part. Sponsorship money is still coming in but is expected to raise several thousand pounds for the Peace Hospice, Watford Mencap and Watford New Hope Trust.

Thanks go to Sigma Pharmaceuticals for organising the event and to other sponsors Mothercare, Total, Camelot, Telecom Resource, The Harlequin and the Oshwal Pharmacists.

2009's walk will take place on Sunday 27 September. Make a note in your diary now!



Putting their best feet forward in the Big Herts Walk were (left to right) Yogesh Patel, Maulin Patel and Mital Parekh who all work for Sigma Pharmaceuticals

Watford Round Table raises £88,878

Watford Round Table members have raised a whopping £88,878 for Watford Mencap!

Round Tablers past and present were special guests at Watford Mencap AGM when ex-Tablers John Holloway and Robin Burgess and current Vice Chairman Daniel Scott handed over a cheque for £88,878.06.

The money was raised through the sale of Table Hall in Oxhey. Watford Round Table originally bought the hall for Watford Mencap in the 1960s, when it was used by people with learning disabilities.

Director of Watford Mencap, Jane Pattinson, said: "We would like to thank the Watford Round Table for donating this sum of money back to Watford Mencap. The money will be used to build the sustainability of our services for people with learning disabilities for the future. The Tablers also support us by organising the Watford 10k and we look forward to our continued close involvement with them."



Pauline Joy, Peter Taylor, Daniel Scott, Nick Wood, John Holloway, Richard Townley and Robin Burgess with a big fat cheque for Watford Mencap!

If you would like to support Watford Mencap in a new partnership please ring
01923 713622

Chorleywood gets behind Watford Mencap

The Chorleywood community is pulling out all the stops in its efforts to support Watford Mencap.

Chorleywood Golf Club ladies have chosen Watford Mencap as their Charity of the Year, Chorleywood Tennis Club is a big supporter, and we have received a donation from Chorleywood Youth Football Club which has also invited our Children's Services to use its pitches.

Local pharmacist Hitesh Dodhia and his family are also big supporters of Watford Mencap in their work for the Big Herts Walk.

Veronica Chamberlain, Watford Mencap Funding Manager, said: "The Chorleywood community has really got behind Watford Mencap. Thank you very much to everyone in the town!"

Read on to find out more...

Anyone for tennis?

The cry of 'anyone for tennis' was answered when players battled it out at the Chorleywood Tennis Club Finals Day.

At least 100 people watched as players of all ages served up an exciting day of tennis in seven finals matches.

Herts Junior Champion Jessica Stone, 12, won the Ladies Singles and joined Andrea Ritecz to take the Ladies' Doubles title as well! Meanwhile, Luke Willis, 15, won the Men's Singles title before teaming up with his dad to take the Men's Doubles cup too.

Another winner on the day was Watford Mencap which benefited from a £210 donation from Chorleywood Tennis Club – adding the total the club has raised to £433.

Bob Arthy, Men's Tennis Captain, said: "We prefer to support a charity where local people benefit and we know Watford Mencap does a brilliant job in our community."

Waitrose Rickmansworth donated the barbecue food, which was served by Elaine and Tom Loh and Harry Christie.



Pictured (left to right) are winners and helpers Andrea Ritecz, AJ Reus, Wendy Reus, Luke Willis, Paul Willis, Rachel McKenery, Jessica Stone, Andrew Causton and Andrew Bowler (standing behind Rachel)

Golf Club's splash for Watford Mencap

Chorleywood Golf Club ladies have come up with some novel ways to support Watford Mencap as their Charity of the Year.

If a member hits a ball into the pond, she has to donate 50p to our charity; this has already raised £91 for Watford Mencap! This is on top of other events including a Bridge Day which raised £281.

Lesley Peers, Ladies' Captain, has a good understanding of the great work carried out by Watford Mencap because her niece has a learning disability and lives in a Mencap home.



Golfers Peggy Fordham, Dee Hughes and Lesley Peers are pictured (left to right) looking for a ball in the pond!

Local pharmacist's big-hearted support

Chorleywood pharmacist Hitesh Dodhia and his family are big supporters of Watford Mencap.

Hitesh, a member of the Oshwal Pharmacists' Society which supports the Big Herts Walk, took charge of registration on the day of this year's 10k walk which raised funds for local charities including Watford Mencap.

As well as running the Parade Pharmacy, Hitesh and his wife Rajula carry out a great deal of voluntary work, while their son Vikash is tops when it comes to raising sponsorship.



Our residential home, Thorpedale, is in nearby Station Approach. Thorpedale Project Manager Keith Seager and resident Janet Speed are pictured meeting up with Hitesh and Rajula. Pictured, left to right, are Hitesh, Rajula, Janet and Keith

Chrysalis Church Group

St Andrews Church in Chorleywood runs a group for adults with learning disabilities called Chrysalis. If you know of anyone who would like to go, please contact Laura and Mark Sutton on 01923 721036 or email chrysalismcs@yahoo.co.uk

Get your dancing shoes on!

If you like to dance, try out the Special Needs Dance Group which meets every Tuesday from 7 to 8pm at Holywell Community Centre, Tolpits Lane, Watford.

Dance sessions cost £3 each and are aimed at people aged between 13 and 25. Over the course of several weeks you will learn different dance routines – that could be disco, street dance or salsa.

In fact, take a look at our front cover, and right, to see our dancers in action!

Contact June Fletcher or Roy Lee on 01442 454060 for more details.



Raising money 'was walk in the park!'

Leisure Together Hertsmere members met at King George V Park in Bushey for a sponsored walk to raise money and blow some cobwebs away!

Walkers included members of Leisure Together, volunteers, the Mayor of Hertsmere, Sandra Parnell, and Events Officer for Hertsmere Borough Council Shaz Setoudeh, who helped organise the walk. Walkers included members

of Leisure Together, volunteers, the Mayor of Hertsmere, Sandra Parnell, and Events Officer for Hertsmere Borough Council Shaz Setoudeh, who helped organise the walk.

Two laps around the park were followed by a welcoming hot chocolate and coffee in the café. At time of going to press the group had raised nearly £400.

Come and join our Charity Pancake Race

11am on Tuesday 24th February 2009

Rickmansworth High Street

Sponsored by The Coach & Horses pub, Rickmansworth

All runners and supporters are welcome back to the pub afterwards for a complimentary lunch

For a registration form or more information please speak to Lesley Blee on 01923 713622 or email fundraising@watfordmencap.org.uk

It costs £50 to enter with a team of 4
All proceeds to Watford Mencap



Working with John Lewis Watford

John Lewis Watford has declared its partnership with Watford Mencap a huge success after choosing us as its local Charity of the Year for 2008.

As well as raising £6,000 for Watford Mencap, John Lewis Partners have organised a raffle, a sponsored abseil, a Bollywood evening and a choral competition for secondary schools (pictured below).

They have also donated a new kitchen for Homeoaks, a dishwasher and TV for Thorpedale, a tumble dryer for our Children's

Centre, as well as hosting a children's tea party.

Lesley Blee joined us on a very successful six-month secondment to research our services and interview our contacts, while Cat Proudfoot and Elise Thomas got wet on an activities day with Leisure Together.

The Branch Forum, representing all partners, dug the Berrywood garden; the Personnel department repainted our Bushey shop; Dorinda Michie and Wendy Ray organised various events, and David Green joined one of our Trustees' sub-committees.



Giving a helping hand at John Lewis

Five people with learning disabilities gained work experience at John Lewis in the run-up to Christmas.

This was all thanks to a partnership between the high street retailer, Hertfordshire County Council's Work Solutions and Watford Mencap. Brian Charge, Zak Wilding and Ray Webster (from Work Solutions), plus Carol Shenton and Tom Witherow (from Watford Workshop) packed shopping and helped customers around the Watford store.

Work Solutions offers help and support to people whose situation makes it difficult for them to get and keep a job, and registered charity Watford Workshop provides training and employment for people with disabilities.

John Lewis' Lesley Blee, working on secondment at Watford Mencap, brought everyone together.

Sally Newton, HCC Executive Member for Adult Care and Health, said: "Not only will those taking part learn a host of new skills, they will also receive a reference which will hopefully help them get a permanent job."

Watford Mencap's Director Jane Pattinson said: "People with a learning disability really want to work, and this is helping their dreams become reality."

Employers wishing to offer work experience should contact Work Solutions on 01438 844911 or 01442 454464. For more information, visit www.hertsdirect.org/caresupport/worksolns/

Fun Day is the icing on the cake!

Football, cake decorating, art and singing were enjoyed by visitors to a special Fun Day at Merchant Taylors' School in Northwood.

5th and 6th formers invited Leisure Together members from Watford & Three Rivers to join them at the event.

Watford Mencap has a blossoming partnership with Merchant Taylors' School. Last year the Ladies' Association raised £2,300 for Leisure Together. The school's Director of Music, Richard Hobson, advised and judged in the John Lewis Choral Competition, and a pupil is a regular volunteer with the Leisure Together IT classes.

Jamie-Lee Quinn is pictured enjoying the cake decorating with Shmoyel Siddiqui

Photo: Richard Owen



Thanks to the following for their donations and support:

St Peter's Church (£300); **Goodrich Power Systems** (£354.20); **Leggatts Show Group** (£50); **Rachel Bird, Natwest Bank** (£250), **Sarah Filler, 10K run** (£111); **Radlett Junior Squash Club** (£337); **Chorleywood Common Youth Football Club** (£210); **ACL Property Finance** (£2,575). **Chorleywood Tennis Club** (£210); **Lesley Peers, Ladies' Captain, Chorleywood Golf Club** (£372); **Tudor Residents Association** (£530); **David Morris** (£300); **Waitrose Rickmansworth** (£533); **Kindle Entertainment** (£500); **Our Lady Catholic Church, Rickmansworth** (£50); **Friendship Lodge, Masonic Association** (£50); **Jo Jingles** (£208.79); **A H Mackintosh** (£50), **Mrs L Goodman** (£50); **Bushey Festival Jazz Evening** (£375.72)

Watford Round Table (£88,878.06); **John Lewis Watford** (£3,100 from Choral Competition, plus raffle prizes and gifts throughout year); **Vocalink**

(sponsors of our Annual Review and £547); **Baker Tilly** (sponsors of Annual Review); **Croxley Green Baptist Church** (£700 for Homeoaks).

Donations in kind from **Visual Images** (Big Herts Walk); **Sigma Pharmaceuticals** (sponsors of Big Herts Walk); **Nabs Lilley** (Big Herts Walk warm up); **Rising Sun Brewers Fayre, John Whatling and James Tetlow** (Christmas Tea Party); **Together Communications; Hertsmere Borough Council; Merchant Taylors' School** (Watford Mencap Fun Day); **Watford Girls' Grammar School** (weekly use of IT suite); **Royal British Legion, Rickmansworth** (use of hall); **Wilkinsons** (vouchers).

Also donations from **Mrs J Turnbull, Margaret and Gemma Federico, Sylvia Hatch, Don and Pam Eungblut, Pam and Malcolm Robertson, N Clark, Mrs Rawcliffe, Ann Gibson, Connie Howarth and Wendy Kynaston** and everybody who kindly donated along with their membership.

Charity shop gets a great new facelift

Our Watford Mencap shop in Bushey has been given a new lease of life.

The charity shop – opposite the pond in Bushey village High Street – was redecorated by a team from Watford John Lewis' Personnel Department.

Shop manager Jean Darke said: "They have done a fabulous job! John Lewis' people have worked their socks off to make sure we re-opened on time. I'd also like to thank my 30-strong team of regular volunteers who cleared the shop and helped me restock."

The new-look shop was officially re-opened by Hertsmere Deputy Mayor Councillor Eddie Roach who is pictured with John Lewis Personnel team member Louise Pinckney.



Better health care for those with learning disability

People with a learning disability are 58 times more likely than others to die before the age of 50.

Breathing and heart diseases are the most common causes of death amongst people with learning disabilities.

Nurses from the Hertfordshire Acute & Primary Liaison Health Facilitation Team support people with a learning disability to get the right care, and make people who work in the health service aware of people's needs.

If you know someone with a learning disability

Say hello to Zdenka Kolarova

Welcome to Zdenka Kolarova who is the new Project Manager at Hillside residential home in Oxhey.

Zdenka, who is from Prague in the Czech Republic, and her husband spent 2 years volunteering at the Camphill Village Trust which supports people with learning disabilities and mental health problems.

For the past 6½ years, Zdenka (pictured with resident Rosemary Culbert) has been manager in a care home specialising in learning disability and mental health issues. She joined Hillside in October.

Watford Mencap is pleased to welcome Zdenka.



who is going to hospital, you can refer them to the Acute and Primary Liaison Team in one of these ways:

- Complete a Contact Assessment and email to Acute and Primary Liaison Team on apl@hertspartsft.nhs.uk with patient and department details
- Fax Contact Assessment to 01727 829479
- Telephone the Acute & Primary Liaison Team on 01727 829800 and give patient and department details.



ASK
Ruth

Dear Watford Mencap

I care for my daughter who has a learning disability but I am not sure what financial help I can get. I am unable to work because of my caring responsibilities.

Where can I go for help?

Many carers find it very difficult to get help and it is estimated that between 40-60% of disability benefits go unclaimed each year. Watford Mencap's Advice & Advocacy Team can help guide you through the benefits maze. There are, however, some basic rules you should follow. To begin with the disabled person should claim Disability Living Allowance which can be awarded in two parts - one for care and one for mobility. As a carer, you may also be eligible for a Carer's Allowance as well as Housing and Council Tax Benefit. More information is available from www.direct.gov.uk or call the Advice & Advocacy team on 01923 713620.

Watford Mencap AGM

More than 150 people attended the Watford Mencap AGM at the Watersmeet Theatre in Rickmansworth.

Presentations were given by young people (pictured) from the Hand in Hand Project; Pam Robertson and Luke Gordon who talked about Little Martins and the in Control (now New Solutions) project and Jenny Tomley, Managing Director of John Lewis Watford.

Charity Chairman Don Eungblut said: 'I would like, on behalf of the Trustees, to thank the staff and volunteers of Watford Mencap for a tremendous effort over the past year. These community partnerships make us so strong, ensuring that local people with a learning disability get a fair deal and can make the most of life.'



Diary Dates ...Diary Dates ...Diary Dates

If you enjoy darts, dominoes or table tennis, why not enter the annual Mencap Indoor Sports Championships on May 9th? The event, organised by the Rotary Club of Watford Clarendon, will be held at The Thomas Parmiter Sports Centre, High Elms Lane, Garston, from 10.30am until 5pm. Entry Deadline is March 21st. Contact Dr John Newman on 01442 832390 or email newman.flaunden@tiscali.co.uk

Nominations are invited from footballers wishing to take part in the National Mencap football trials at Warwick University on Sunday, 3rd February 2009. 15 players will be selected to represent Mencap in Switzerland

for a European football tournament at the end of May. Closing date for nominations is 23rd January. Email sport@mencap.org.uk

Netball training for the Marion Smith Netball Tournament begins on 15th January from 6.30 to 7.30pm at the Herts Sports Village, De Havilland Campus in Hatfield. Email marie.pate@mencap.org.uk or telephone 01279 653894.

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