

InTouch

The voice of learning disability in South West Herts

Winter 2011

watford
mencap
60 years

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Happy New Year from Watford Mencap to all our readers!

2011 will be a very difficult year for the charity. We face reductions of hundreds of thousands of pounds in our Herts County Council funding. I have a brilliant team of staff and volunteers, but there is no doubt that we shall struggle to provide the same level of service as before.

I hope that you will find a way to help us. If you have not already done so, please remember us in your will and let us know. Mrs Betty Lydon, through her generous bequest, made it possible for us to convert The Old Town Hall and install the first Changing Places toilet in Hertfordshire. We shall offer rooms for hire in our fully accessible premises and this will both help us make ends meet, and also provide a new facility for local people with disabilities.

The number of people with a learning disability is growing, so the need for our services has never been greater.

We are still training our staff to make our services more personalised, and we are developing new partnerships. We will rely even more in the coming year on our volunteers and supporters. In this edition you will find suggestions of ways to become involved, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Jane Pattinson



New guide helps communication

Mencap has published a new guide on ways to communicate with people who have the most complex needs, including people with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD). The guide was commissioned by Mencap in partnership with the Department of Health. Download the guide at: www.mencap.org.uk/communication



Maureen Cowell

It is with great sadness that we report that Maureen Cowell suddenly passed away on Saturday 11 December 2010.

We enjoyed Maureen's company in the summer at the Fun Fair in Bushey, which she always loved – her friends from Leisure Together will miss her very much.

Our thoughts are with her mother, Mrs Cowell, at this sad time.



John Holloway

We are also saddened by the death of John Holloway who was Chairman of Watford Mencap and Chairman of the Round Table in Watford during the 1960s. He played a major role in raising money for Table Hall. Our thoughts are with his family. We hope to print a fuller obituary in our April issue.

Volunteer receives Digital Hero Award



Pictured, left to right, are Richard Wallace, Editor of the Daily Mirror; Martha Lane Fox, co-founder of Lastminute.com; Nick Clark, Watford Mencap volunteer and Charles Dunstone, Chairman of the TalkTalk Group

Watford Mencap volunteer Nick Clark received a Digital Heroes employee award from TalkTalk at a ceremony held at the House of Lords.

TalkTalk, in association with Citizens Online and the Daily Mirror, launched this year's Digital Heroes awards. They celebrate people who use digital inclusion to benefit their local communities, bringing positive social change.

Nick, who was awarded a grant of £1,000 for Watford Mencap, has been volunteering for the charity for over 5 years. Working on the Learning and Leisure project, Nick has helped provide IT classes to people with learning disabilities. Recent courses have included internet, email, Skype and Facebook.

Lata Rees, Watford Mencap's project co-ordinator, congratulated Nick on this thoroughly deserved honour and thanked him for his unwavering support. She also thanked TalkTalk for their generous contribution, which will mean more people with learning disabilities will benefit.

Key Points

- Watford Mencap volunteer Nick Clark has received a Digital Heroes employee award for providing IT classes to people with learning disabilities

Hillside residents enjoy Kenya trip

Hillside residents Cliff Berry and Karen Sood got really close to some jungle creatures during a 2 - week trip of a lifetime to Kenya.



Cliff and Claire get wrapped up in a large snake

Cliff and Karen were joined by staff members Annabella Doolan and Claire Carter on a 4 - day safari followed by a relaxing few days on the beach. They enjoyed seeing monkeys, giraffes and bravely held snakes and crocodiles!

Other highlights included getting breakfast in bed, being taught how to light a fire and being invited to a wedding.

Both Cliff and Karen brought back a selection of souvenirs including pictures and wooden crafts, which they bought in the African villages and markets.



Karen takes control of a baby crocodile

Key Point

- Hillside residents Cliff Berry and Karen Sood and 2 staff members enjoyed a trip of a lifetime to Kenya

The Cuts - It's Official

Hertfordshire County Council has warned Watford Mencap to prepare for funding cuts of 20%-25% in children's and adult services.



They have also completely cut funding to our Saturday Club which supported 55 families with monthly respite, despite our campaign in the local press and the support of MP Richard Harrington.

This is part of the Comprehensive Spending Review. We know it will hurt our services for people with a learning disability and their carers, and are working as hard as we can to minimise the effect.

So what are we doing?

- Renting space in the Old Town Hall to Rickmansworth Waterways Trust and to national Mencap for Raising Your Game
- Asking our volunteer management consultant, Roger Jones, to identify cost savings
- Asking all our staff to save money by turning off lights, copying double-sided, only printing in black and white, printing our own stationery and to suggest other ways to save
- Offering our meeting room and activity area for rent and providing office services eg. laminating (phone 01923 713620 for details)

- Developing our Casual Bank of workers to fill gaps
- Campaigning with national Mencap against the cut to the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance for people in residential care, which could leave them isolated and unable to go out
- Developing partnerships with local businesses like Camelot and VocaLink
- Organising and supporting events to celebrate our Diamond Jubilee Year, and raising awareness through our new Ambassador scheme

What can you do?

- Support all Watford Mencap's fundraising events and appeals (see the diary on page 11)
- Put a link to our appeals and website on your Facebook page
- Organise a fundraising event of your own
- Take a Watford Mencap collecting box
- Give us your email address to save postage
- Make a donation using our Gift Aid form
- Ask your community, faith or sports group to adopt Watford Mencap as its charity
- Organise something at work and ask your employer to support Watford Mencap
- Volunteer as a regular minibus or car driver, or become an Ambassador speaking to groups about us
- Bring in unwanted Christmas presents and other saleable goods to The Old Town Hall or our shops in Bushey and North Watford; we have a thriving eBay business
- Recycle your rags, electrical goods, books and mobile phones through us
- Write to your County Councillor and MP to tell them what Watford Mencap's services mean to you (find them on <http://www.hertsdirect.org/yrccouncil/>)

If you would like to help Watford Mencap survive the cuts, return the form with this In Touch in the Freepost envelope, phone Lauren or Sarah on 01923 713622 or email fundraising@watfordmencap.org.uk

Launch of new premises and toilet

Three Rivers District Council Chairman Ron Spellen, 'Birds of a Feather' star Linda Robson and fellow members of the Watersmeet pantomime opened Watford Mencap's Old Town Hall and Changing Places toilet on 22 December. Corporate and local authority supporters came to celebrate the opening and find out more about Watford Mencap.

Three Rivers' Community Toilet Scheme is supporting the Changing Places toilet, the first of its kind in Hertfordshire. It will allow profoundly disabled local people to use the toilet in privacy and dignity, enabling them and their carers to shop in Rickmansworth High Street.



A coffee morning with added sparkle

Watford Mencap supporters Monica Griffin and Alf Loose are organising a Diamond Jubilee coffee morning on 7 April from 10am to 12 noon at the Old Town Hall, Rickmansworth - the new Watford Mencap offices.

The event is for people who were involved in Watford Mencap during the early days, 1950s to 1980s. If you would like to come and catch up with old friends, please contact Monica on 01923 223133 or email monica@griffinuk.net



Watford Mencap goes vintage

Watford Mencap took part in Watford's first vintage fair on 27 November and raised £225 from goods given through our charity shops. We are always looking for new outlets to sell our donations. Thanks to volunteers Robert O'Riordan and Mary Flinn for their hard work.

60 years on - stories wanted!

Thank you to Mrs Isabel Backman, who responded to our request for information about the first days of Watford Mencap. Now you can see her in the film on our website! Click on 'Get Involved' and then 'Diamond Jubilee'.

If you were involved with Watford Mencap at any time from 1951-2001, please get in touch. We are looking for stories and information about what life was like for people with a learning disability, their families and carers. Email development@watfordmencap.org.uk or call Veronica on 01923 713637.

Diamond Jubilee collection boxes

Watford Mencap will be distributing home collection boxes in February to encourage supporters to raise £6, £60 or £600 to mark our Diamond Jubilee year. These collection boxes can be used to hold charity coffee mornings or you can take them to work for charity days. If you would like a collection box, please contact Lauren on 01923 713622.

Mencap raises the game

Raising Your Game is a 5 year project, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, and is being delivered by Mencap (the national charity), I CAN and Nacro.

The project aims to help young people aged between 14 and 25 with a learning disability or communication difficulty, especially those who have offended, or are at risk of offending, to help them turn their lives around. The project is happening in 6 pilot areas across England: Hertfordshire, Avon & Somerset, East Kent, Greater Manchester, Leeds and West Midlands.



Getting ready to climb a tree on a Raising Your Game trip to Somerset

In Herts we have 3 youth advisory groups – Girls & Boys Aloud in Watford, Rickmansworth young people's group and we are starting a third group with a local secondary school. Together we aim to influence positive changes in the lives of young people with a learning disability and in the services available for them, enabling them to have a say in, and help design, services targeted at them.

The young people involved in the groups will have opportunities for social events,

outings, training, voluntary and possible employment. We provide workshops and skills development sessions on subjects that the young people want. These include education, leisure and employment opportunities. It gives young people the voice they need to shape their own future.

Here one of the young people who attends Girls & Boys Aloud sessions explains a bit about her life and Raising Your Game:

Have you ever had difficult experiences of school or college?

Sometimes I have had difficulties with my friends. At school I had lots of friends but when I went to college I found everything quite different and hard.

What do you hope for in the future?

I would like to get a job, be independent, to go on holiday and to live on my own or with a friend.

How do you think Raising Your Game will help you with your future life plan?

I think it will help me because everyone here cares about me and wants to support me with the things that I want to do.

For more information on Raising Your Game contact Natasha on 07852 230832.



Key Point

- Raising Your Game is a project which aims to help people aged between 14 and 25 with a learning disability or communication difficulty. One of the pilot areas is in Watford

Hertfordshire Girls Football Partnership League

Hertfordshire Girls Football Partnership League has chosen Watford Mencap as its charity of the year. The league is currently moving into its third season and continues to focus on the players' skills on and off the pitch. We wish them the best of luck in all their future games.

Dancing in the aisles at AGM

Over 150 people attended Watford Mencap's Annual General Meeting (AGM) to launch our Diamond Jubilee year.

During 2011 we will be celebrating 60 years of service in South West Herts with a series of events including a Diamond Jubilee Ball on 29 January, the Watford 10k run on 2 May and a singalong Mamma Mia at the Watersmeet Theatre, Rickmansworth, on 2 November.

As well as conducting the formal business of the AGM, members and friends watched a film celebrating 60 years of Watford Mencap. The film tells the differing experiences of 2 mothers of children with Down's Syndrome.

Some of the hopes and dreams of Watford Mencap members and supporters were also posted on a special wall.

Among their hopes were 'to open a charity shop', 'to help me find a house of my own', 'to go to Disney World', and to 'help me to be more independent.'

We hope to make some of these dreams come true.



Key Points

- Watford Mencap's AGM marked the launch of our Diamond Jubilee year
- People also posted their messages on a 'hopes and dreams' wall

Keeping fit with Leisure Together

Thanks to the hospitality of Watford Grammar School for Boys, Leisure Together members are having fun and keeping fit!

Around 14 sixth formers from the school volunteer to help run the sessions which are held every Monday from 6.30pm until 8.30pm. These fun sessions attract between 25 and 30 Mencap members and cater for all abilities.



Daniel Stubbington gets to grips with the rowing machine

The 'keep fitters' learn how to use the school's state-of-the-art fitness equipment and weights, as well as focusing on stretching and warming up and down. They then divide into groups to have fun dancing or to take part in sports activities such as bowling, curling, badminton, football and mini tennis which are run by volunteers from Watford Football Club.

School co-ordinator Alex Harper reports: "I hope Monday evenings at Watford Grammar School for Boys is a place where people come and can shed their inhibitions about what they can and can't do. All of the volunteers enjoy the satisfaction of seeing members get healthier, gain confidence and independence and make new friends."

Alex adds: "Myself, together with the other sixth form volunteers, wanted to make a difference, and being part of Watford Mencap's Leisure Together programme is helping us achieve this."

Key Point

- Fun fitness sessions are held every Monday from 6.30pm to 8.30pm at Watford Grammar School for Boys

Beat the winter blues

If you are interested in beating those winter blues and getting fit in 2011, why not organise a fundraising event for Watford Mencap at the same time?

Swim 60 laps of your local pool to mark Watford Mencap's 60th birthday, organise a diamond shaped walk in honour of our Diamond Jubilee or run an organised race in aid of Watford Mencap.

Follow in the footsteps of these Watford Mencap supporters:

- In September, Bernie Byers and Julia Braithwaite raised over £500, in memory of Bernie's sister Patsy, by running a half marathon.
- In April 2011 John Whittle will be running the London Marathon in aid of Watford

Mencap. Sponsor him now at <http://bit.ly/eNGRdD>

- In 2011 Hand in Hand will be running 60 laps for Watford Mencap

Don't forget the Watford 10k on Monday 2 May, sponsored by Camelot and in partnership with the Watford Round Table. Go to www.watford10k.org.uk for more information and to register.

Key Points

- Why not help Watford Mencap raise money in our Diamond Jubilee year?
- You could swim 60 laps of your pool or organise a diamond shaped walk

Watford Mencap has new branding

We hope you like our new-look In Touch and logo. We have changed our branding to fit in with the new national Mencap branding so that people recognise us as part of the same family. Pictured is our Bushey shop when they put up the new signs!



Festive Tea Party

A magician, games, chocolates and a visit from Father Christmas all helped make Watford Mencap's annual Christmas Tea Party a fabulous festive hit. Over 100 people attended the party which raised more than £220 for Watford Mencap. Thank you to hosts the Rising Sun pub in Croxley, Ferrero for the chocolates and magician, James Tetlow.



Robert Scullard (centre) won a signed Watford FC football in the raffle. He is pictured with James Tetlow and Father Christmas

VocaLink raises £3,500 for Watford Mencap

International payments specialist VocaLink took a creative approach to Christmas fundraising for Watford Mencap, the charity partner for its office in Rickmansworth.

The company held a charity auction with a difference, inviting corporate partners to its City offices in Gresham Street. Under the hammer were 17 paintings (pictured) created by children and young people aged between 7 and 19 who use Watford Mencap Children's Centre.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Marion King acted as auctioneer and achieved sales of £2,300 for the paintings. Then Jenny Campbell, CEO of YourCash, bid a further £500 for a commissioned work for her offices.

VocaLink added to the proceeds raised, bringing the total donation to £3,500. Marion King said: "You can see from the paintings,

that imagination is something that the children and young adults of Watford Mencap have in abundance, and VocaLink are pleased to offer our continued support towards their development."



Key Points

- Young people from our Children's Centre painted 17 paintings which were auctioned by VocaLink
- The auction raised £3,500 for Watford Mencap

Have you seen Watford Mencap's new website?

Watford Mencap launched a brand new website on 10 September to match our new logo.

The new website is bright and easy to use, and full of information for people with learning disabilities. It has certain features like Browsealoud, which makes the website talk to you.

It also has links to our Facebook, Twitter, eBay and Just Giving pages. Soon it will have an updated blog for people to discuss the latest news and issues.



Key Point

- Check out Watford Mencap's new-look website at www.watfordmencap.org.uk

Rose and Crown's charity of the year

Watford Mencap would like to thank the Rose and Crown in Kings Langley for choosing us as their charity of the year.

In the coming year they will be doing a variety of different events and activities to raise as much money as they can.

Landlady Lisa Simons said: "We are absolutely delighted to have Watford Mencap as our chosen charity and will

be doing everything we can to support the cause." For more information please visit www.roseandcrownkingslangley.co.uk

Key Point

- Our thanks to the Rose and Crown in Kings Langley for choosing Watford Mencap as their charity of the year

Camelot gets festive for Watford Mencap

Elves, fairies and penguins joined Father Christmas in delighting the youngsters at a Christmas party at Watford Mencap Children's Centre.

The party was organised by Watford based Camelot UK Lotteries Limited, operator of The National Lottery. Camelot's Insight Team ran lots of fun activities for the children, including biscuit decorating, wrapping the Mummy, pass the parcel and making Christmas cards.

The children also met Watford Football Club mascot, Harry the Hornet, and were over the moon to receive personalised presents from Father Christmas.

The team, with support from many of Camelot's suppliers, raised an impressive £6,721 for the party and Children's Centre.



Vanessa Mayhead of Camelot's Insight Team said: "We had such a great time at the party and I am so glad the kids enjoyed it. All the children were lovely and Father Christmas was such a big hit."

Lauren McEvoy, Watford Mencap Fundraiser, added: "The party was fantastic - everyone had a smile on their face. It has been great to work with Camelot, the whole team got involved and we would love to work with them again."

Key Point

- Youngsters at Watford Mencap's Children's Centre enjoyed a wonderful Christmas party thanks to Camelot UK Lotteries Ltd

Watford 4 Watford – keeping it local

Watford Mencap joined forces with Herts Inclusive Theatre and the Watford New Hope Trust to take part in a new charity initiative called Watford 4 Watford.

A team of over 20 volunteers took to the stations, pubs, bars and clubs in Watford to raise awareness and money for the 3 charities. Volunteers helped from 7am to 11pm and raised more than £980.

Watford Mencap would like to thank John Lewis, the Watford public and all the Watford 4 Watford volunteers.

Key Points

- Watford Mencap, Herts Inclusive Theatre and the Watford New Hope Trust took part in a charity initiative called Watford 4 Watford
- Volunteers raised more than £980 by visiting stations, pubs, bars and clubs and asking for donations

On your marks and flip that pancake!

COME AND JOIN WATFORD MENCAP'S PANCAKE RACE AT 11AM ON TUESDAY 8TH MARCH 2011 IN RICKMANSWORTH HIGH STREET

SPONSORED BY THE COACH AND HORSES
Teams will be invited back to the pub for a complimentary lunch

It costs £50 to enter a team of 4 and all proceeds will go to Watford Mencap

If you would like more information or a registration form please contact Lauren on 01923 713622 or email lmcevoy@watfordmencap.org.uk

A Big Thank you

Aldenham School
Mrs Backman
Battle Axes Pub, Aldenham
Bernie Byers and Julia Braithwaite
Burrda
Camelot
Camelot Insight Team
Click Theatre Productions
Coach and Horses
Sally Ashley-Cound
Deliver Events
Diamond Jubilee Ball Committee
Michaela Dickinson
Pat Dunkley
Don Eungblut
Annabel Feley
Ferrero
Mr and Mrs Gasper
David Golden
Capital Radio Help a London Child
Judi Herman
Half Way House
Martha Halford-Fumagalli
P. Holden
Beryl Hutt
John Lewis
Kenwood
D. Kirk
Ian Kopelowitz
Leggatts Warblers Show Group
Masquerade
Mr and Mrs Maskell
Merchant Taylors' School
Ramiro Montesdeoca
Mothercare
H. Murphy
North Watford Conservatives Club
Neil and Linda Payne

Pro Action
Mrs Punt
Radlett Preparatory School
Revue Variety Company
Rising Sun
Roberts Newby
Rose and Crown
Mr and Mrs Rowe
Royal Masonic School
Sainsbury's Dome Roundabout
Angelina Sclafani-Murphy
Sigma Pharmaceuticals
SKM Studio
St Joan of Arc School
St Peter's Church
Storeys Removals
Audrey Tavener
James Tetlow
The Financial Management Group
The Harlequin
Together Communications
VocaLink
Watford Boys' Grammar School
Watford Business Club
Watford Football Club
Watford Observer
Watford Round Table
John Whatling
Willow Farms
Mrs Wright
Thank you to everyone who has purchased tickets and donated items for our Diamond Jubilee Ball.
A big thanks also to everyone who donated along with their membership and to all those who donated goods for our shops and eBay sales.



2011 Diamond Jubilee Diary of Events

Saturday 29 January

Diamond Jubilee Ball at the Watford Hilton

Friday 11 February

Diamond Quiz Night at The Old Town Hall, Rickmansworth

Tuesday 8 March

Rickmansworth Pancake Race

Thursday 7 April

Diamond Jubilee 'reminiscence' Coffee Morning at The Old Town Hall, Rickmansworth

Sunday 17 April

John Whittle is running the London Marathon for Mencap and Watford Mencap

Monday 2 May

Watford 10k run www.watford10k.org.uk

Saturday 14 May

Watford Boys' Grammar School Dance

Sunday 22 May

Diamond Dog Walk in Bushey

Wednesday 1 June

Volunteers' Day at the Riverside Esporta, Northwood

Monday 20 – Sunday 26 June

Learning Disability Week on the theme of Hate Crime

Friday 7 October

Watford Mencap's AGM and 50s Dance at Watersmeet, Rickmansworth

Thursday 3 November

Singalong Mamma Mia at Watersmeet, Rickmansworth

For more information on any of these events see www.watfordmencap.org.uk or call 01923 713622

Talent Corner



Michaela and Ian at Watford Mencap's AGM

Volunteer Michaela Dickinson showcased her singing talent at the Watford Mencap AGM and had everyone dancing in the aisles!

Michaela took to the stage with Ian Kopelowitz, who works at Little Martins in Bushey, to perform a rendition of Neil Diamond's 'Sweet Caroline'. The song was chosen to link in with a diamond theme, celebrating the start of Watford Mencap's Diamond Jubilee year.

Michaela has been volunteering at the Watford Mencap head office for 2 years. If you are interested in volunteering with Watford Mencap, please contact Jo on 01923 713626.

Key Point

- Michaela Dickinson and Ian Kopelowitz wowed the crowds at the AGM



Ask
Ruth

Dear Watford Mencap

I have a learning disability and have heard a lot recently about benefit changes. I am really worried as I don't know if I will be affected. I currently get Incapacity Benefit and Disability Living Allowance.

It is obviously a worrying time, but we hope we can help. Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is remaining pretty much the same, although people who live in residential care will no longer be able to keep their Mobility money from October 2012. In 2013/14, rather than filling in a big form to claim or renew DLA, everyone will have an assessment instead.

Incapacity Benefit, however, is changing, along with Severe Disablement Allowance. The Government will be re-assessing everyone on these benefits using the rules for a new benefit, called Employment and Support Allowance, which are slightly different. This will start in Hertfordshire from February onwards and in general people will be moved onto Employment and Support Allowance. Anyone who is due to retire before 2014 will not be included.

If you would like more information or need help when you are contacted about being re-assessed, call Advice & Advocacy on 01923 713620 or email advice@watfordmencap.org.uk

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