



SPRING NEWSLETTER 2019

We were one of twenty charities in Thanet to receive recognition for our outstanding contribution to the local community this year...continued on page 8

A WORD FROM OUR CEO

Our merger with the Isle of Sheppey Mencap group is very exciting news, and means we can make a big difference for people with a learning disability on the island. It is early days, but our members already have some brilliant ideas for new projects.

2019 is going to be a year of growth as we have also finally completed the purchase of our new site in Ramsgate, Foresters Hall. Although we have been operating from there for several years we are now the owners of the whole site, with far more space. There is a lot of work to make it all useable but we have big plans!

Inside this issue you'll also read about how members have been getting involved with their local community including celebrating our success at the Thanet Community Awards, enjoying a mini break, setting up a new men's group and volunteering with the local cub scouts.

The last issue featured an article about 'Pupils Voice', a project in partnership with Foreland Fields School and I was delighted to hear that they had been recognised for their efforts with an award - see page 4.

Volunteers are vital to the success of many of our clubs and fundraising efforts. We are lucky to have some brilliant people who give their time and expertise for free. You can read about some of their work and how you can get involved on page 6.

Read on for more news and stories and do contact us if you think you have something to contribute, whether it is ideas, skills or your opinion, we enjoy hearing from you.



Jason Gerlack,
Chief Executive Officer



We provide opportunities for adults and children with a learning disability in East Kent, enabling them to achieve the things they want out of life. We believe that everyone should be valued as equals and have their voices heard. For more information or to sign up to an e-version of this newsletter, contact 01843-224482 or email info@eastkentmencap.co.uk.

Designed & edited by Lauren Betts and distributed with the help of David Benson and Noah Downs-Brown

Registered Charity Number:220798

@EastKentMencap



LOTTERY FUNDED



Winner 2019



Is your singing out of this world? Galaxy Choir need YOU!

We're looking for enthusiastic volunteers with a passion for singing to encourage people with a learning disability to engage at our weekly choir between 4pm and 6pm on Thursdays. If this is something you'd be interested in, please contact us on 01843 224482 or email: info@eastkentmencap.co.uk



A new place to call home

Long established local charity, the Isle of Sheppey Mencap, has announced that it will be merging with East Kent Mencap.

Following the sad death of their Chairman, Mr Ken Shaw, who made such a valuable contribution to people with learning disabilities on the island, Trustees made the decision to find a suitable organisation to merge with to ensure the existing good works continued.

Jason Gerlack said: 'This is a fantastic opportunity for people with a learning disability and their families in Sheppey. The substantial assets bestowed on the charity will enable us to invest in new and exciting activities that will honour the legacy of the Isle of Sheppey Mencap and provide much needed local services. We have already consulted with people about what they would like to see happen and we are developing four new flats.'

Trustee, Mr Alan Shaw, commented: '**Having worked with East Kent Mencap in the past, we knew they shared similar aims and objectives. After several meetings with the Chief Executive, Mr Jason Gerlack, we were reassured that the charity will carry on the work we spent many years establishing.**'

School's success

Foreland Fields School in Ramsgate has been awarded the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Rights Respecting School **GOLD Award**. UNICEF's vision is 'a world where the rights of every child are realised'. This is the highest stage of the Rights Respecting Schools Award which is granted by Unicef UK to schools that have fully embedded children's rights throughout the school in its policies, practice and ethos. Foreland Fields is the first Kent LEA special school to achieve the Gold Award and the second Kent LEA school (all schools) to be awarded it. Foreland Fields School has worked with East Kent Mencap in connection with Kent County Council's 'Valuing People Now' initiative which involved their sixth form pupils sharing their views with the wider community and giving a presentation to the Kent Partnership Group. The Headteacher, Adrian Mount, said: '**I am extremely proud of all staff and pupils who supported us in our bid for Gold Award status.**'



We're expanding!

We have some very exciting news to share! We've finally completed the purchase of Foresters Hall in Ramsgate after Thanet District Council agreed to sell the property through a Community Asset Transfer.



Foresters Hall, which includes a listed building from 1811, as well as other properties, will provide us with much needed space to expand its services for people with a learning disability and their families.

CEO, Jason Gerlack said, 'We have experienced a growing demand for our services and were bursting at the seams in our current offices.

The new site offers so much potential and we plan to develop a venue that is modern and light, offering state of art resources for people with a learning disability, their families and carers as well as volunteers and staff, and the local community.

Foresters Hall has been a community venue for over 200 years but it has been neglected in recent years and now looks shabby and unwelcoming. We want to bring it back to its former glory through a programme of refurbishment. It will not be a quick fix and we are approaching people and organisations to ask for their help with the restoration.

The initial response has been very positive, and we are already in talks with Ramsgate Heritage Action Zone Team about involving

the local community.' Melanie and Sarah, who take part in activities, said they were excited to have more space for activities and to display their arts and crafts.

Another member, Jamie, commented that there would now be room for parties and discos.

The Mayor of Ramsgate, Councillor Trevor Shonk, who is a great supporter of our work, responded saying, 'This is a much needed service and all at East Kent Mencap should be really proud of achieving the purchase of Foresters Hall which will be a great asset to the local area.'

Over the next 12 months, we will be running a series of community events and activities, based at Foresters Hall to raise funds for the project and invite feedback.



Meet Adika

'I am a social work student from Canterbury Christ Church University in my second year of study. As part of my degree I have to complete a seventy day work placement within the local community, which I am currently undertaking with the **Getting On with Learning Difficulties Project** in Thanet.

Before I started my placement I was quite nervous as I had not worked with adults with a learning disability before, so I didn't know what to expect. Since being on placement I am really enjoying my time here. It's honestly such a heart-warming feeling to be able to support and empower individuals to become independent.

Individuals with a learning disability are often discriminated against, marginalised and isolated within society due to stigma. This can affect people's self confidence and the way they perceive themselves which can make them vulnerable.

Overall, I am looking forward to the rest of my time with the project and seeing what the future holds for GOLD and its members.'

New group for men

The Getting On with Learning Difficulties Project have launched a new social group, exclusively for men.

Following the success of the Women's Group, project worker, Simon Handley asked the men who regularly attend GOLD their thoughts on starting their own group. The group provides a safe place for men with a learning difficulty to meet up and talk about things that are important to them.

So far the group have met three times and have covered topics like relationships, hate and mate crime and how they could recruit more members to join them. The topic of relationships has proven to be something that men are keen to talk about, such as the difficulty of trying to meet new people and how sad it is when relationships go wrong.



Members of the group spoke to us about what it means to them:

Ben said: **'It is good because men can talk about things with other men and it gives men with learning disabilities a voice.'**

David said: **'Men's Group is alright, I hope it carries on.'**

The group welcomes any local men with a learning difficulty to come along and join them on the second Monday of each month. They meet at the GOLD Office at 215 Northdown Road, Cliftonville, CT9 2PF between 2pm and 3pm. For more information please contact Simon at simon.handley@eastkentmencap.co.uk or call 0845 004 1876

Volunteers wanted

The Getting On with Learning Difficulties Project would love to hear from you if you could spare time to volunteer at their weekly and monthly social groups.



Women's Group

Support women to meet up and talk about the things that are important to them



Gaming

Do you have a competitive streak? Come and battle it out against other gamers



Sunday Lunches

Support others to meet up at the weekend for a pub lunch



Crafternoons

Get crafty and support people to learn new skills at these therapeutic sessions



Cinema trips

Do you like watching films? Come and share your passion with others



Men's Group

Support men to meet up and talk about the things that are important to them



Thanet Thinkers

Help people find out what's going on in their local area at Thanet Thinkers



Snooker Club

Fancy a game of snooker? Come and support others to meet new people and have fun

If you are interested in supporting any of the activities above, please contact Amy at: amy.johnson@eastkentmencap.co.uk or give her a call on 0845 004 1876.



Adventures with friends

Back in December, Canterbury Community Staff, Kerry Williams and Kelly Forest supported Alison and Muriel on an adventure around Germany.

The group travelled by coach across the Eurotunnel and stayed in Belgium for a night before continuing their journey. They visited Bonn Market on the way to their hotel in Germany which sold lots of handmade gifts. The group stayed in the Valleys of Rudesheim am Rhein in a traditional small hotel. During their stay they visited the markets of Wiesbaden. On the journey back home, the group visited Koblenz market and stayed in France overnight before returning back to the UK the next morning.

Alison said: 'I really enjoyed myself and liked looking at all the different things that people had made. I trying a Currywurst for the first time and liked it. I would love to visit different markets.'

Muriel said: 'I had a lovely time and had a laugh, we had nice food.'



you can find this button online.



The workshop went on to discuss email phishing scams and the group were advised to delete any suspicious emails that requested money or personal details. Paul Pinder, who attended the workshop said: 'It was good because I had a question to ask them about the risks of Facebook and they answered it.'

Staying safe online

In January, Kent Police hosted an Internet Safety Workshop for people with a learning disability at our Herne Bay Resource Centre. The workshop covered social media, online scams and briefly touched on personal safety at the request of the attendees. Local Vulnerable Adult Intervention Officer, PCSO Dan Mimran led the workshop alongside his colleague, PCSO Matt Farley.

PCSO Dan kick started the workshop by asking the group how we know when people are our friends. He stressed how easy it is for strangers to connect with you online at the click of a button and this is why we should only accept or send friend requests to people we consider friends in real life. The workshop also discussed how Facebook should not be used as a dating site to try and make new friends or start new relationships. If you're using the internet to look for a relationship there are a number of regulated online dating agencies that can be looked into, but also consider looking for local social groups to meet new people.

PCSO's Dan and Matt advised the group that it is important to only post things online that they would say in real life to people. He discussed what we should do if people are saying inappropriate things to us online which include; telling a carer, blocking the person or if appropriate clicking the child exploitation online protection command. Child Exploitation and Online Protection is a law enforcement agency designed to keep children and young people safe from sexual abuse and grooming online. If you are in a situation where you need to report something

PCSO Dan Mimran commented: **'It is important to help and support people with learning disabilities, autism or mental health issues as they can be some of the most vulnerable in our society as they can be the most trusting. My talks and workshops are not designed to scare people into never trusting anyone again, but to help educate them in a way they can understand to keep themselves safe. It is designed to empower people to say, 'No I don't have to accept this abuse'. It helps people to acknowledge who and how to ask for help. The key message is always, if you don't tell anyone then nothing will change and by telling someone who can help, change will happen for the better.'**

We all have our difficulties in life when we find it hard to say something or tell someone or even recognise we need help. For people with a learning disability, this challenge can be even greater, so it is my job to be a part of that process alongside organisations like East Kent Mencap, to help empower, give confidence and educate people on how to keep themselves safe.'



Award winners

We were one of twenty charities in Thanet to receive recognition for our outstanding contribution to the local community this year.

Neil and Natasha, who are both on our members committee, attended on the night alongside Operations Manager, Karen Loughrill to accept the award on behalf of East Kent Mencap.

Both Neil and Natasha were great ambassadors for the organisation and enjoyed engaging with other local groups during the evening to find out about the work they were doing in the area. Natasha even posed for a few selfies!

Natasha said: **'I had a great evening and I'm really proud of myself!'**

The awards were organised by KM Charity to highlight the outstanding voluntary work in the Thanet community.



Scouts gain disability awareness badge

Tenant, Lee Norris had the pleasure of awarding disability awareness badges to cubs from the 1st Teynham Scout Group in January.



Lee, whose scout leader name is Rama, has attended the group for five years now and helps to plan camps, day trips and badges as part of his leadership duties.

He approached our Swale Community Manager, Becky Edmeades, to see if she would support him to give a presentation about disabilities to the children who attend the scout group in order for them to achieve their Disability Awareness badge. Lee researched a variety of disabilities to talk about and created a PowerPoint presentation. As part of his presentation he planned interactive tasks for the cubs to complete which included learning to sign their name in Makaton and a blind taste test.

Swale Community Manager, Becky said: **'Lee did an amazing job of presenting to the cub scouts! He kept them engaged and interacted with the children to understand how they perceive people with a disability'**

See me and hear my voice

To mark International Women's Day this year, we teamed up with POW! to highlight unique life experiences of women with a learning disability. International Women's Day is celebrated worldwide on 8th March every year and celebrates womanhood.

Photographer, Sarah Wyld and writer, Lucy Edematie worked with a group of women who regularly attend our Getting On with Learning Difficulties Project and Thanet Resource Centres to create an exhibition of life stories through interviews and photo shoots. The immersive exhibition was held at Pie Factory Gallery in Margate in March and featured images, stories and sound clips to illustrate the lives of the women we support. Visitors were able to listen to clips of the women singing their favourite songs, read about places they've visited and see images that truly captured their personalities.

Some of the women featured also marked the occasion by marching in the POW! Thanet opening procession, organised by artist Jessica Voorsanger, on International Women's Day with a banner hand-made by staff and members of our Margate Resource Centre. The group thoroughly enjoyed ringing bells and chanting along Margate seafront with other local groups to celebrate women from all walks of life.



Disco fever

We hold four dances a year at the Red Arrow Club in Ramsgate for members and their guests to have a great night out with friends. They always sell out and Valentine's Day proved to be no exception this year! The remaining dances will be held in June, October and December. For more details please visit our online events calendar at www.eastkentmencap.co.uk or call 01843 224482.

Jacquie who attended on the night said:

'We had another fantastic night at the Valentines dance! I have been going for over thirty years and we've enjoyed each and every one. The three staff that have run the last ones have been Maria, Tris and Lynda and need a pat on the back for their hard work! Thank you!'





A manic motoring mission

In May, Sue Bates from our Getting On with Learning Difficulties Project will be taking on the mighty 'Fireball Rally'.

The challenge is a manic motoring mission through Europe navigating through **8 countries in just 7 days!**

Armed with only a map and a tent, this epic journey will take Sue through France, Monaco, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Italy, Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium. She will tackle alpine passes and pass iconic places, some expected and some probably not!

Sue is funding the trip herself, so every penny raised through sponsorship will go directly to **East Kent Mencap** to enable people with a learning disability to achieve the things that they want out of life and to be valued, treated equally, listened to and included.

To make it more exciting, everyone who sponsors a **minimum of £5 donation** will be entered into a competition to guess the total mileage of her epic adventure. The closest guess wins Cream Tea for Two at Quex Barn, Birchington. Our journey will

start and finish in Lydden. How many miles? You guess! To enter the competition, simply leave a comment when you donate £5 or more with your mileage guess!

To make her car look like the 'wheel' deal, Sue is offering advertising space to local businesses. Advertisements will be displayed locally around East Kent for two weeks prior to rally, across Western Europe during the week long trip and again locally for two weeks on return. If you are a business owner or know a business that would be interested in this unique and affordable advertising opportunity please email: **Rally.RetroBates@gmail.com** for details.

You can follow Sue's preparations before the big day as well as journey updates direct from the Facebook page: **TeamRetroBates2019**

Please help Sue reach her goal and donate to the online funding page at: **<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/Team-RetroBates>**

Make sure to give Sue a toot and a wave when you see her around in May!

Dates for your diary:

For details of events call 01843-224482
or visit: www.eastkentmencap.co.uk,

Thanet Valuing People Now Event

Tuesday 26th March 2019

St Pauls Church,
93 Northdown Road,
Cliftonville, CT9 2RD
10:30am-12:30pm

Canterbury Valuing People Now Event

Wednesday 27th March 2019

Active Lives
Cumberland Avenue,
Canterbury, CT1 1SL
10:30am - 12:30pm

Dover Valuing People Now Event

Thursday 28th March 2019

Betteshanger Welfare Sports and Bowling Club
Cavell Square,
Deal, CT14 9HR
10:30am-12:30pm

KM Big Bike Ride

Sunday 28th April 2019

Betteshanger Country Park,
Deal, CT14 0BF

Festability

Saturday 11th May 2019

Quex Park,
Park Lane,
Birchington, CT7 0BH
12pm-8pm

KM Colour Run

Sunday 9th June 2019

Betteshanger Country Park,
Deal, CT14 0BF
10:30am start

Red Arrow Dance

Friday 14th June 2019

Red Arrow Club,
Newington Road,
Ramsgate, CT11 0QX
7:30pm-10:30pm

Use code:
KMVIP
when booking
KM sponsored
events to
receive a
discount



Meet Demi

'I'd love to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Community Fundraising Officer based at Foresters Hall in Ramsgate. I am extremely excited to take on this role, with lots of exciting ideas for the near future! I am particularly eager to be working closely with the people from our local community in order to spread the ethos of East Kent Mencap as far and wide as we can!



If there are any of you who are willing to share ideas, suggestions, fundraise, volunteer, have previously been involved with any East Kent Mencap related activities, or would be eager to get involved in future events/fundraising activities, please do not hesitate to get in touch at demi.price@eastkentmencap.co.uk or better yet, come and say hi! I would love to hear from, and/or meet you all!

Demi Price,
Community Fundraising Officer

Thank you for supporting us

Councillor Janet Falcon, who generously donated £400 from the Ramsgate Fund to our Gardening Group for their spring planting.
Sharon Ferdinando, who kindly donated a toy rocket to our Complex Needs Resource Centre.
Amy Rutland, for raising £117 through a birthday fundraiser on Facebook.
Brian Whitehead, who kindly volunteered his spare time to take photographs at our Valentine's Dance.
Lesley Boyd, who kindly hand stitched personalised bunting for our events.
Victoria Gayle Interiors, for donating £100 for The Big Spring Clean 2019.
Sophie, Lisa and Lucie, for raising £270 through sponsored events for our Complex Needs services.

Providing opportunities for adults & children with a learning disability in East Kent

01843-224482 | www.eastkentmencap.co.uk | info@eastkentmencap.co.uk

Come along to one of our clubs!

For details of how to join our social groups visit: www.eastkentmencap.co.uk, or call: 01843-224482



MONDAYS:

Gateway Club
6:45pm-8:45pm,
132 Northdown Road,
Margate, CT9 2RB
£3 entry



TUESDAYS:

Thanet Thinkers
1pm-3pm,
Costa Coffee,
209 Northdown Road,
Margate, CT9 2PF
FREE entry



WEDNESDAYS:

Drop-in Session
10am-2pm
215 Northdown Road,
Cliftonville, CT9 2PF
FREE entry

Snooker Club
From 2pm onwards,
215 Northdown Road,
Margate, CT9 2PF
Pay to play



Fit Start
4pm-6pm,
Foresters Hall,
Meeting Street,
Ramsgate, CT11 9RT
FREE entry



Bowling Club
5pm-7pm,
Bugsy's Bowling,
Ethelbert Crescent,
Margate, CT9 2DY
£3.60 entry



THURSDAYS:

GOLD Group
1pm-3pm,
Royal Victoria Pavilion,
Harbour Parade,
Ramsgate, CT11 8LS
FREE entry

CHOIR
4pm-6pm
New Gateway House
132 Northdown Road
Cliftonville, CT9 2RB
£5 entry

