



Special Parents

Welcome!

The Summer holidays are upon us! For some families this is a really stressful time with feelings of division in the families when there is more than one child, or feelings of being stuck indoors with no where to go. Please feel free to use the facebook group to

shout out if you want to organise a get together over the holidays, other parents may feel the same and be pleased of some company.

As always there are no daytime group meetings in

August but the evening meeting will still go ahead and I look forward to seeing everyone again in September at the daytime meeting.

Committee News/AGM

This year's AGM took place in July and was attended by all committee members and five group members. Minutes were major part of the AGM was taken up with information from the treasurer who detailed our finances and said we had had a good year financially. Minutes have been taken and can be viewed on request.

It was also announced at the AGM that Marie Baker was to stand down as committee member and move to a role of professional advisor instead.

I would personally like to thank Marie for everything she has done for Special Parents and for offering to continue as an advisor, without Marie we wouldn't be where we are today, she has been an invaluable support to me and i thank her for all her input and continued advice.

Group Meetings



Rachel and Carolyn

As stated before, daytime group meetings don't run in the school holidays, however they do resume in September 2011 and dates of meetings are listed at the end of this newsletter. Please try and attend the meetings if you can, the group was set up to allow parents to come together and share information and we therefore really rely on the peer support provided in the groups. Eastbourne group meetings are run by Rachel and Peacehaven group meetings are run by Carolyn.

Unfortunately we have now had to cancel the evening group meetings held at Stone Cross, the number of attendees had fallen a great deal lately although there were regular parents attending each month. Some time ago the decision was made that for safety two committee members would need to be present at each meeting and unfortunately none of the other committee members were available to assist running the group, therefore in light of the poor attendance and lack of staff it was decided to cancel the meetings. Apologies to anyone that is inconvenienced by this.



Sibling Bowling Event

We were really fortunate again this year to be awarded funding from A2A to allow us to take our siblings on a night out.

Following last year's successful bowling event we decided to repeat this event but incorporated a game of laserquest into the evening too.

We divided the teams up and all had one game of bowling each before moving on to an exciting

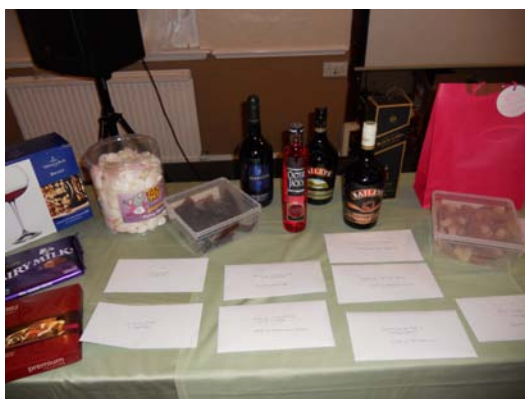
game of laserquest. Jenni won the bowling and Alex won the laserquest.

We all enjoyed a meal after the activities and were thoroughly worn out!

All the parents completed an evaluation form following the event which enabled me to compile some feedback to the organisation that funded the event, this is so valuable to us as it shows the funders that the money was used in an

appropriate way and that the siblings benefited from this, in turn this helps us if we were to reapply for this funding.

We are looking into future sibling events and are open to ideas of what to do so please contact us if you have any suggestions. We will attempt to hold another event before the end of this year or early next year.



Quiz Night 2011

Oh what a night!!!

I'm so pleased to be able to write about another really successful quiz night, the event was really popular and we almost filled the function room of The Drive pub where we held the event.

Dannii (our treasurer) wrote an excellent and varied quiz and the main quiz was won by Sam Sprange and her team, the best team name was 'Loose Women - Special Branch' won by Carolyn Francis and her team who proved to live up to their name!

Following the quiz we held a raffle using prizes donated by local

businesses, members and committee.

By the end of the evening we raised a massive £408.00 for the group which we were very pleased with! We were also really pleased with the positive comments we had from everyone that attended, in particular asking us to hold the event more often which Dannii is looking into.

Can i personally thank Dannii for all her hard work that she puts into this event beforehand and at the event and also Steve Visick of Visick Cars for again donating the star raffle prize of the night.



banners, posters and fundraising buckets to be designed and made informing me of the progress all the way through.

Basically Wayne, his wife and family walked around with fundraising buckets all day and also held an auction to auction a signed Chelsea football which raised a lot of interest from the people at the event.

I was so pleased the next day to get a phone call to tell me that on the day

they raised a massive £645.68 for Special Parents.

Many thanks to Wayne and Gina for organising this event and fundraising and to all the sponsors on the day that enabled this event to take place.

Surrey Scooter Rally 2011

I was approached some time ago by a friend of mine, Wayne James, who was keen to help raise funds for Special Parents. I gave him lots

of information about the group, what we did and why we needed the group locally for our parents.

I heard nothing until recently when Wayne contacted me again to ask for the rights to use the logo and literature for the group. Wayne arranged for all the



Bridgemere Summer Fair.

Stephen Lloyd MP, Sam Cuttall, Rachel Moran, Sam Tuppen, Melissa Pattison, Chrissy Higgins.

Promoters: Tuppenny Toys and Beauty By Hand.

Bridgemere Summer Fair

A few months back I was approached by the organisers of the Bridgemere Summer Fair as they wanted Special Parents to be their nominated charity for the event. I was absolutely delighted!

I was involved in all the meetings leading up to the event and asked my opinion on the ideas they had and on the day both myself and Carolyn ran the raffle stand and Sue Morris (member) came along to run the refreshments.

I was even more pleased when Stephen Lloyd's office phoned and asked if we'd like Stephen to open the event for us and we jumped at the chance!

On the day we had such a good time, it was so nice to meet the stall holders and see how supportive they were towards Special Parents and also to meet visitors to the event that wanted to know more about us and the work we do.

We raised £255.15 on the day which is a wonderful amount and we're very grateful to all that contributed. Also thanks to Sue Morris for helping out on the day.

SVWOC Charity of the Year

I am very pleased to be able to announce that Special Parents has been chosen to be the charity supported by the East side of the Sussex Volkswagen Owners Club for 2011/2012. We were nominated by Serena Redford (who is a friend of Sam Tuppen, committee member) who has heard about the work we do and suggested us as the nominated charity.

This is a huge step forward for us as it will give us a huge amount of advertising for the year which is invaluable in getting our name recognised.

Please see their website for more information about the owners club and the work they do for charities.

http://www.thesvwoc.org.uk/main_pages/svwoc_charity.html

Sussex Community Fund

Following an application earlier in the year we have been awarded £2,200 towards the ongoing work that we are doing for our members, this will enable us to organise family trips, sibling trips and the parent events over the next year. Please look out for emails about forthcoming events.

Website and Facebook

You may have noticed some changes to the website and Facebook group....

The website has now been updated with a 'news page', this is run by administrators and enables us to post current news on the website, therefore keeping it updated and looking fresh to people searching for information about the group, it also now includes a photograph of Rachel and Carolyn so that people can see who photos of the people that are running the groups they can attend.

We have also changed the way we are seen on facebook, there are now two information pages; Special Parents - Eastbourne and Special Parents - Peacehaven, these are for Carolyn and I to inform the public about the groups and events or issues in the area, only Admin can post in these groups. Then there is the members only closed group; Special Parents Support Group, this group is by invitation only and everyone has to be a member of Special Parents to gain an invite. The group is private and takes the place of our previous website forum allowing members to post comments freely without non members being able to view the comments or responses.

I hope these new changes meet the needs of our members but if you have any ideas of changes you'd like us to make please feel free to contact us.

Buddy Scheme East Sussex

I have had a lot of discussions with James Elphick who runs the buddy scheme in East Sussex and wanted to pass this information onto you through our newsletter. James is very knowledgeable and very keen to get more young people involved in this scheme so please contact him if you think he could help you and your family.

The Buddy Scheme is for children and young people with learning disabilities, complex health needs, ASD and challenging behaviour, aged between 8 and 19 years. It provides 1-1 buddy volunteers to give young people the opportunity to take part in a range of activities that include regular youth club evenings, events in the local community and residential trips.

All volunteers undergo training, CRB checks and references and help young people feel included, confident and comfortable in various settings. If you would like more information on the Buddy Scheme please contact the Buddy Scheme Co-ordinator on 07505 661085 or email james.elphick@seap.org.uk

Forthcoming dates for your diary

Date	Details
6th Sept 2011	Eastbourne Group Meeting
10th Sept 2011	Parent Meal
13th Sept 2011	Peacehaven Group Meeting
4th Oct 2011	Eastbourne Group Meeting
11th Oct 2011	Peacehaven Group Meeting
1st Nov 2011	Eastbourne Group Meeting
8th Nov 2011	Peacehaven Group Meeting
25th Nov 2011	Beauty by Hand fundraising event
4th Dec 2011	Special Parents Christmas Party
6th Dec 2011	Eastbourne Group Meeting
13th Dec 2011	Peacehaven Group Meeting



Snippets!!!

.....We are in the process of arranging a private hire session for Clambers in Hastings so that the whole family can attend, I will email all members with further details as soon as arrangements are made.

..... We are looking into purchasing some places for a 26 mile trekathon in September 2012, this is an organised event for charities to buy places for people that wish to take part and fundraise for them. Anyone wishing to take a place will be committed to raising a minimum of £100 in sponsorship. We will provide any participants with a fundraising pack including a 'Special Parents' t-shirt that can be worn on the day and obviously our full support. If you are interested please contact Rachel asap.

..... I am very pleased to inform you that we are applying for charity status for Special Parents. We have been advised by our treasurer that this is the best way to take the group forward and will be beneficial for us in many ways. I will keep you informed of the progress.

And finally.....

On the next page a member has kindly written an article for the newsletter which we are very grateful for, it's always lovely to have input from the members and makes the newsletter more interesting for all who view it.

If you would like to contribute an article like this, or about an experience you have had please email me on rachel@specialparents.org.uk

Newsletters are produced approximately every four months so it gives you plenty of time to put pen to paper.

Please also use the above email if you wish to contact Rachel or anyone else on the committee or if you have any questions about the group or this newsletter.



The Thomas Centre

A member's view

Since our daughter was 11 months old, it has been a very steep learning curve for us as a family, understanding firstly the condition of epilepsy and then her Consultant in London identifying her as showing the signs of ASD and starting along that route as well.

After 18 mind blowing months, we discussed trying to get a break away as a family from the house and even that was hard work trying to find a place which would 'do the job' for each one of us to enjoy in some way.

Eventually, we found The Thomas Centre in Lincolnshire and decided to give it a go after reading the following, which seemed to cover everything:-

At The Thomas Centre, the holiday park is designed specifically for families and groups where a member has an Autism Spectrum Disorder or related condition. Set in a dedicated 25 acres site near the Lincolnshire coast and the Wold's market town of Louth. The 4 and 5 star accommodations include 3 houses and 3 bungalows. The bungalows have been built with wheelchair disabled access. Facilities include a private indoor heated swimming pool, woodland, community room and an indoor play barn with skittle alley, pool table and more. An outdoor play area and pedal go-kart track are also available.

We offer a **non-judgemental** stress free holiday for the whole family and group.

And so, off we went! When we arrived we were greeted by Jan Crean, the Owner (who herself has an Autistic son) who kindly showed us to our house and later took us on a short tour of the facilities. We had also been left a 'welcome pack' to get us going food wise for the first night which was nice, as it had been a long journey.

The swimming pool was to be booked out to families privately to enjoy at varying times of the day to suit. This was a nice idea as it gave our daughter the opportunity to enjoy the water 'her way'.

The house was lovely, and had all the home comforts of the washing machine (so no backlog when you get home!), TV and DVD player etc.

Our daughter seemed to love the openness of the environment and just ran and ran, all in one direction though and being turned around to come back did cause a number of very loud meltdowns and tantrums, but finally it didn't matter how loud or for how long because everyone there at some stage or another experienced the same thing so for once, you knew no-one was going to look, stare or say anything!

Our son found a friend, a sibling of a cystic fibrosis child, who he teamed up with and spent many an hour skateboarding, go-karting, cycling and just being 'teenage boys' with all their gadgets!

It was hard at times, with only a limited number of the distraction toys for our daughter and her not sleeping well in the new environment, but every now and again we got a few minutes peace to just sit and enjoy the views.

We did find that with the facilities, our daughter couldn't manage them on her own and with lack of understanding, most of the time it was a 'full on' break and so we came home for a rest!

We were lucky with the weather which made a big difference as it is very much an outdoors place but at the end of the day, even though other attractions to visit and shops etc. are a good drive away, it did enable us to have a change of scene, relax a bit in the knowledge that no-one is judging us and give us some confidence that it is possible to do things with our daughter away from the house for a change!

If you wish to look up the Thomas Centre, the web site is www.thethomascentre.co.uk