

Getting Creative at Jigsaw

Students in the woodcraft and art departments at the Jigsaw Study Centre require a contrast of good organisational skills and a free flowing imagination.

Most students are able to make their own decisions as to which medium they wish to work in. Some are able to communicate their choices in words whilst others may respond better to visual prompts; their choice might be made with a nod or a blink. Time and patience plays a large roll in getting to know each student's preference. They often become focussed and involved in their art and hopefully gain a sense of purpose.

Below are two recent success stories from Jigsaw.

"This is the plate that I made in carpentry at the Jigsaw Study Centre. I made it almost entirely by myself with very little guidance. The plate is made of Turkey Oak and it took me four days to make it. It is the best thing I have ever made and I am very proud of it". G.L



In November a group of students and staff went to Ogilvie Court in Colchester to an exhibition celebrating art by people with learning disabilities where some of our students had entered a selection of their work.

It is always interesting to see what other people are doing and there was such a range of effort and talent on show. Our students certainly benefited from seeing other people's work and the opportunity to chat to friends – and of course sample the buffet!

We were delighted to learn that two of our students had won awards for their work. Silver went to Paul for his Self-Portrait painting and Bronze to Tony for his textile collage of 'The Kiss' by Gustave Klimt.



Well done to everyone for your hard work and a special well done to Tony and Paul. Thank you also to Ogilvie Court for inviting us to share our art.

Welcome



We would like to welcome Alice Deslauriers to Head Office. Alice is a Trainee Clinical Psychologist who will be joining Fran Davies and Sarah Clayton in the Clinical Psychology Department for one day per week as part of her Clinical Psychology Doctorate training. Alice is currently a second year student at the University of Essex and will be on placement at The Essex Autistic Society for one year.

Alice joined Fran and Sarah in October 2006 and has already helped plan and present to undergraduates at the University to help raise awareness of autism and the lack of services available for not only people on the spectrum, but also to their families and carers.

Alice will be visiting all of our units over the next few months and will, under the supervision of Fran, be involved in individual and group therapy sessions, assessments and staff training.

We are also pleased to welcome a Speech & Language Therapist, Bethan Franklin, to the Society. Bethan will join us in March and will work with both our children and adult service users.

Useful Contacts:

The National Autistic Society

Information, Advice and Support

0845 070 4004
www.nas.org.uk

Families inFocus (Essex)

Supporting families of children and young people with disabilities and special needs

01245 353575
www.familiesinfocusessex.org

Colchester Cares Centre (For Children)

Provides a range of services to families, carers of children with disabilities

01206 560997
www.cccfrc@aol.com

SNAP (Special Needs and Parents)

Essex wide support group for parents and carers

01277 211300
www.snapcharity.org

SAFE (Supporting Asperger Families in Essex)

Support groups in Colchester, Chelmsford, Basildon & Southend

01206 240931
www.aspergers.org.uk

Remembering the Summer

Richard from Ashton House enjoyed four nights away last summer at The Haven Holiday Centre in Caister with Jo Bennett and Ken Randal. They had glorious sunshine everyday, and just look at the beach – who needs the Caribbean!



We would like to welcome Karen Bradford to the position of School Secretary at Doucecroft School. Sally Richell is still working part-time in the role but once Karen is fully trained Sally will mainly be organizing and co-ordinating the pupil's reviews.

Sally has been a Secretary at the School for 16 years, although has been working at Doucecroft for 29 years altogether, having previously held the positions of classroom assistant, mid day cook and playtime assistant.

Farewell

After 4 years with the Adult Services administration staff, Helen Horslen has moved onto pastures new. We wish her well for the future.

Peldon Santa Answer: Ian Brown, Director of Adult Services

The Essex Autistic Society



Newsletter

Issue No 12 - New Year 2007

Review of 2006

Clive Stobbs, Chief Executive

Last year I reviewed 2005 and can remember thinking what a tremendously busy and exciting year it was and that 2006 would be quieter surely. How wrong I was!

Below I have listed just some of the highlights of 2006 - to list everything we have done would fill this entire newsletter! We've opened two more classes and another boarding house at the new Doucecroft School; built a new kitchen at the Further Education Department; we are looking after two adult tenants in Colchester in agreement with the Colne Housing Society, we've landscaped the outside of Bourne House; and built a life skills kitchen at Jigsaw Study Centre. We have also expanded our Family Support team and continued to raise our profile in the community.

I think 2007 is going to be even more exciting than either 2005 or 2006. Under the agreement with Colne Housing Association they will provide three more houses in 2007 for another nine adults with Autism whom we will support. Jigsaw Study Centre is bursting at the seams and during 2007 we will search for a suitable site for Jigsaw2. Our fundraising team are launching a campaign to raise funds to convert The Cottage at Peldon into a new three-bed unit for Complex Needs adults and we have appointed a Speech and Language Therapist to work with all our service users. Finally, Head Office is expanding but I'll let you read more about that inside.

Phew – I think that's it. I'm bound to have missed something but I hope I have given you a glimpse of some of our exciting plans for 2007 and beyond.

Doucecroft School is 30 years old

Doucecroft School will be celebrating its 30th birthday this year. It was on the 2nd May 1977 that Doucecroft first opened its doors in Kelvedon to children with autism. During the first term just 5 pupils attended the school but this quickly grew and soon a special nursery unit was opened to help children as young as three. We are pleased to say that some of the children from those early years are still being cared for by the Society in our adult establishments.

Over the past 30 years Doucecroft School has seen many changes. An extension was added to the original building in 1992 which provided a new kitchen, dining room, lounge and additional bedrooms. The older children were moved to a dedicated Further Education centre in 1999 and of course in 2005 the entire school relocated to its new site at Eight Ash Green.

The Essex Autistic Society will be celebrating the school's 30th birthday with a special event in the summer.... so watch this space!

Bourne House Gets a Facelift

Thanks to a generous grant from a Charitable Trust we have been able to make some much needed improvements to the garden of Bourne House in Colchester, home to four adult service users.

The grant enabled us to make significant improvements to the front garden and provided more suitable parking spaces for the house MPV, staff vehicles and visitors. The back garden was also enlarged and new steps created from the lounge.

You will see from the pictures below that the building and landscaping that has been carried out over the recent months has made a vast difference to the house. The residents can now take pride in their home and enjoy the new gardens and plants that surround them.



Before



After

Christmas at Peldon

The residents of our adult establishments had fun at their Christmas party. Entertainment was provided by a comedian and magic duo and even Santa made an appearance – but can you guess who it is?? Answer on the back page.



Berechurch Hall Road

The Essex Autistic Society has teamed up with Colne Housing - a Colchester-based housing association - to provide two homes for adults with autism. Colne Housing purchased two neighbouring houses in Colchester and the Society will provide the dedicated care packages to the tenants. Two more similar houses are planned over the next year.

The first house, in Berechurch Hall Road, got up and running on the 1st November 2006. Two service users have moved in and are very quickly settling into their new home. They are now enjoying a full activity programme promoting their independence as safely as possible.



The staff team consisting of Adrian, Jenny, Magda, Stuart and Cheryl have also worked well together to ensure that the environment provided feels homely and comfortable for the service users.

A very big thank you to everyone involved in setting up the project - we can't wait for the next house to open!!!

Family Support

Vikki James has unfortunately left the Society for pastures new, but a new Family Support Worker, Katie Philips, started at the beginning of February. We will also benefit from the Head Office expansion and will have our very own office with space for parents to drop in for advice and a chat.

We were asked last year to help set up a support group for parents of children with autism in Clacton. The first meeting was on the 10th January and although we were a bit thin on numbers the group has decided to continue meeting at Clacton County High School. The next meeting is on 2nd February at 10am.

The Essex Autistic Society has been asked to look into the arrangements that parents can make for their children in their wills. We will be organising an information session where a local Solicitor will be available to talk about setting up Trusts and answering any other questions you may have. If you are a concerned parent of a child with autism - whatever age - please contact us to find out more.

In the meantime please feel free to contact Jo Keys if you require any form of help or advice. **01206 577678**
jk@essexautistic.org.uk

Film Star!!



Mark is officially a film star!!

After gaining his parents consent, a film crew commissioned by Essex County Council came to Clacton to film one of our adult Community Support service users for a short film. They filmed Mark with the various signs and symbols we have displayed around the house as an example of how alternative communication can be used. The short film will be used at various training conferences around Essex.

Head Office

The Society's Head Office in North Station Road, Colchester is expanding by moving into some empty office space right next door to the current offices.

This will mean that the Clinical Psychology and Family Support teams will no longer have to share a desk and will have their very own offices. We will also have more space for the growing numbers of staff joining the Society.

Adult Services staff from 'The Cottage' in Peldon will also be moving into the offices. This will mean that from February, Ian Brown, Director of Adult Services, Terry Webster Community Support Manager and Mandy Stedman, Administration Manager, will be located at Century House in Colchester.

News from the FE Dept

The students from Doucecroft Further Education Dept in Kelvedon have been studying 'The Media' as part of their curriculum, and have enjoyed a visit to a local Print Firm where they watched magazines being printed off.

Some of the students were privileged to be able to go and see "Ready Steady Cook" and meet the stars and crew backstage afterwards to ask questions about the making of a TV show.

They also enjoyed a visit to the lively stage show 'Stomp' in London, where all the music is made through the implementation of everyday artifacts and is presented in dance form. This was a thrilling experience and although they took ear plugs, ear defenders and mapped out escape routes, in case it was too much of a sensory overload for the students - they didn't need them - all were spellbound! Now the students are busy making their own percussive instruments from every day items so that they can make a composition to play at our leavers/presentation evening in July. We have also booked them some time in a recording studio, so that they can make a CD of their piece of music - another slice of media studies! To enable those of our students with more complex needs to understand the world of work, they have followed the way in which post is processed. Our local Postie dropped in to show them "the tools of the trade" and this was backed up with a visit to the local sorting office to see behind the scenes. We then secured a 'leaflet drop' for a local business, so that the participants could experience the delivery aspect of a postman's work.

'Preparation for Work' is an important part of the life skills curriculum and we are busy making items for sale in our "Mini Enterprise". The items that will be on sale are a variety of arty crafty with a black and white theme. The sale of goods will be held on **Tuesday 13th March**, all day. Not only will the students have made the products, they will be doing the finances and administration as well as the sales on the day. We would like to extend an open invitation to all to come along to the FE on the 13th, so make a note in your diaries!

Next on the agenda will be planning for 2007's residential educational trip in the Summer...it's all go!



2007 Dates for Diary

Saturday 17th February - Supermarket Collection, Manningtree

We have been offered the opportunity to hold a collection for the Society outside Fiveways in Manningtree. If you can spare some time to help out please let us know.

Friday 30th March - AGM

To be held in the evening at Doucecroft School, Eight Ash Green. We will also be marking the school's 30th birthday.

Saturday 14th April - Supermarket Collection, Halstead

Another supermarket collection; this time outside the Co-op Solar in Halstead. Again, if you can spare some time to help out please let us know.

Sunday 22nd April - London Marathon

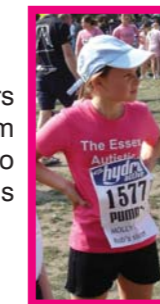
Although we do not have any charity places to offer in the London Marathon we are fortunate to have two 'own place' runners raising money on our behalf. Please look out for Mikk Bradley and Jackie Woolley in this year's race.

Tuesday 15th May - Calling all golfers

The Society's third annual golf day will be held once again at Channels Golf Club in Chelmsford. If you would like to enter a team, sponsor a hole or join us in the evening please let us know.

Sunday 16th Sept - Hydro Active 5km run

Join the EAS running team and 20,000 others all raising money for charity in this 5km running event in Hyde Park. Its ladies only so bring along your mums, sisters and friends for a fun day out in London.



Friday 28th September - Black Tie Ball

The Essex Autistic Society has joined forces with fundraisers from the Essex Air Ambulance, the Essex Wildlife Trust and the Essex Community Foundation to form First4Essex. We hope that by working together to promote our Essex-based charities it will offer businesses and individuals the opportunity to support different types of charities at the same time - a sort of 'One Stop Charity Shop' if you like!

Our launch event will be a black tie ball at The Essex Golf & Country Club in Earls Colne; all proceeds will be split between the four charities.

Sponsored Walk

We have decided to organise our annual sponsored walk in the autumn this year. Watch this space for more details.

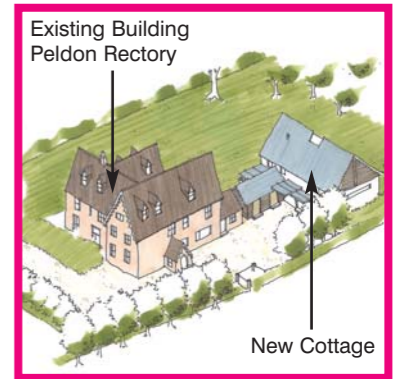
For more information on any of these events please call our fundraising co-ordinator
Anna Trovell on 01206 577678 or email
anna@essexautistic.org.uk

'The Cottage'

Due to the increasing number of children coming up through Doucecroft School and the amount of referrals we currently take for places, the Society has long since identified the need for more adult accommodation.

The agreement we have with Colne Housing Society means that we are able to expand the number of adults living more independently in the community but for those adults with more complex needs there is still a shortage of places.

To resolve this situation the Society has decided to build a new three-bed residential house on the existing Peldon Campus. The Cottage, previously home to the adult services admin staff, will be demolished and a brand new house built in its place.



The new house will cost almost £550,000 to build and equip which we plan to raise from grant making trusts. We hope to be in a position to start on the project in 2008 with service users moving in during 2009.

Watch this space....

Thank You

• To Claire Belcher for organising a collection outside her local Tesco's in Tiptree. She and her friends and family raised a wonderful £259.

• To Hilda Hazell and the ladies of the Forrester Park Golf Club in Great Totham for raising £1,489. Hilda was Ladies Captain during 2005/06 and chose the Essex Autistic Society as her Charity of the Year.

• Thanks to a Sports Relief grant of £1,670 we have been able to purchase 12 sets of waterproof clothing for the children at Doucecroft School. The life jackets, wetsuits and boots will allow us to continue our canoeing activities at Alton Waters.

• To Les Winsley, C&B Mechanical Services and everyone at Crowlands Heath Golf Club for their continual support. Last year's charity golf day raised a magnificent £4,101 for Doucecroft School.

• And finally thank you to everyone who purchased Essex Autistic Society Christmas Cards and Cook Books this year.

Wanted...

We are looking for enthusiastic, energetic people with time on their hands... (do such people really exist?)..to help start up a volunteer fundraising group for the Society. If you have just one of these qualities and would like to meet other such people to have fun and help fundraise for the Society please call **Anna on 01206 577678**.

