

news

Issue 6 Spring 2010



a place to play

Half Way To Funding Target

It was only just over two years ago that Swings & Smiles launched its ambitious fund-raising programme with a target of £400,000 to equip and set up our planned centre to provide a comprehensive recreational facility for families who have children with special needs.

Yet, thanks to all those individuals, groups and companies who have taken our cause to their heart, we have been able to announce that we are **HALF WAY TO THE TARGET.**

Yes, over £200,000 has been raised through bucket collections, golf days, sponsored walks and bike rides and many, many other innovative activities. And all achieved by volunteers and generous donations!

Our chairman, Sian Cook, is astonished at the support we have had so far. She says 'we are so fortunate to have such

great help from the community in West Berkshire. So many people have worked really hard and with such enormous enthusiasm to help make our dream come true. They all deserve the biggest of thank-yous!

'However' adds Sian, 'we cannot rest on our laurels. We are **ONLY** half way there and we need added support to make sure we achieve the full start-up target so that we can be well on the way to opening our new centre.

'2010 promises to be a really key year for Swings & Smiles. Hopefully, we can firm up on a definite site and progress plans which will in due course meet the needs of those families who desperately need our facility.

'Of course,' adds Sian with a smile 'that's when the hard work really begins!'



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What's Happening?

As always, Swings & Smiles is indebted to its volunteers. Many have given up their time to fundraise and to increase public awareness of our charity. During the summer we fundraised at a number of events including the Chapel Row Fayre, Newbury Racecourse and since June, we have collected money at Sainsbury's Newbury on a number of days. None of these would be possible without our many volunteers.

Some of our help came from new sources including **Downe House School** (pupils taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award collected at Sainsbury's Newbury at their re-opening in November), **Patrick House from Kennet School**, Thatcham (some pupils and Mrs Emily Pearson helped pack and collect the weekend before Christmas). Presentations to both schools were made by Sian Cook and Jan Stiff so that the pupils had a greater understanding of Swings & Smiles.

AFC Newbury Boys continue to volunteer enthusiastically and we are so grateful for their willingness to help whenever asked – they came out in force at Graeme Murty's Testimonial Match in July and at Sainsbury's Newbury to help pack and collect in December 2009.

Thank you to all our volunteers who help in any way they can.

Focus On A Volunteer – Katy Hawthorne

Katy has worked tirelessly to support Swings & Smiles and has helped at so many fundraising events. She also manages all our collection tins by emptying them on a regular basis and then taking the money to the unreliable coin counter at HSBC Bank.

Her wealth of experience as a volunteer (Katy organised fundraising locally for Naomi House Children's Hospice for a number of years) also means that she has been a great source of advice.

Special Menu For Special Lunch

The Carnarvon Arms at Burghclere has become something of a 'home from home' for Swing & Smiles as we hold our regular trustee meetings there. It was fitting that the hotel's restaurant was the venue for our charity lunch held in October and Head Chef Justin Brown marked the occasion by creating a special menu.

Swings & Smiles founder patron, Clare Balding, hosted the lunch which was also attended by fellow patrons, Mary Cameron and Peter Baker. Graeme Murty was represented by his wife Karen who, with her friend Sue George, sold raffle tickets which raised well over £600. The lunch also served as the launch pad for our sparkling new website, created by Helen Waring and her team at Cream Design. This is now the prime showcase for all our news and the best source of information for forthcoming events.

Clare presented Friends Certificates to Ann Milne (Emma Woodhead's mother) who accepted the certificates on behalf of Charlie Woodhead and Jonny Swann for the immense fund-raising effort of their cycle ride through France and Spain and also for Emma for all she has done. Certificates were also presented to star helpers Jan Stiff and Katy Hawthorne.



Certificate of Appreciation

Most young people are aware of the importance of a good application form or personal statement be it applying for a job or university/college. Demonstrating that the young person has volunteered is particularly important and so any young person who volunteers for Swings & Smiles is presented with a certificate.

A Fundraising Group is currently being formed which will steer our future events and activities. More information about this will appear in our next newsletter.

Graeme Is Our Top Player

Graeme Murty may have left Reading FC but his years of service as player and club captain left a lasting legacy. Full back Graeme was awarded a testimonial by the club and, as a patron and star supporter of Swings & Smiles, wanted the charity to share in the proceeds. As a result of fund-raising efforts during the testimonial year, including public collections at his testimonial match, more than £12,000 has come to Swings & Smiles.

We all say a huge 'thank you' to Graeme and his whole family for their great commitment to our cause. Graeme is now with Southampton and currently recovering from injury and we wish him every success for the future as a player and beyond. He will continue to be one of our wonderful patrons supported as ever by his wife Karen.

As a result of fund-raising efforts during the testimonial year, including public collections at his testimonial match, more than £12,000 has come to Swings & Smiles

A Very Fayre Result!

The Chapel Row Fayre held at The Blade Bone pub at the end of August is so successful that it takes some while to sort out the accounts and allocate the proceeds to the charities that benefit. Last year a staggering £12,000 was raised, including funds from an earlier dinner in May, the most raised in the Fayre's fourteen year history – an amazing achievement in this period of economic recession.

Swings & Smiles were lucky to be chosen as one of the three charities to benefit and Jan Stiff went along in October to receive our cheque and thank the organisers for their generous efforts.



All In A Day's Walk

Local companies help Swings & Smiles in a variety of ways. Reading-based management consultants **ORH** encourages its employees to support local causes and this year we were chosen as beneficiaries of a sponsored walk along the Thames to Goring.

David Ball led eleven of his colleagues on the walk and their four hours of riverside effort netted more than £1,000 for us.

As Sainsbury's Newbury chosen local charity of the year we were given the chance to collect at the store for the first four days after the opening

Shoppers Are Also Givers

The grand reopening of Sainsbury's Newbury store in November created additional opportunities for shoppers to donate to Swings & Smiles. As Sainsbury's chosen local charity of the year we were given the chance to collect at the store for the first four days after the opening.

Our wonderful pool of volunteers worked hard to raise funds and particular credit goes to Adam Glass and Selvie Dervisheva who put in a mammoth stint on the first day. We are also grateful to girls from Downe House School who, motivated by our volunteers co-ordinator Jan Stiff and the school's own Tony Riddle, spent several hours collecting on behalf of Swings & Smiles.



Donnington Valley Gets Behind Us

Donnington Valley Hotel have helped us in a number of ways already but we were thrilled when they decided to give us longer term support. Following a meeting with General Manager Anthony Cox and Head of Human Resources Debbie Nel we heard that the hotel is asking for a donation from all guests to go to Swings & Smiles. To date, £3,000 has been raised!

Merry Christmas Carols

'Have yourself a merry little Christmas' was the title of a wonderful concert of carols and other festive music given by **The Cromwell Singers** in December on behalf of Swings & Smiles. The concert was staged in the hall of Park House School and an audience of over one hundred enjoyed the singing both from the choir and from the audience itself.

The Cromwell Singers were founded in 1976 and since then have raised many thousands of pounds for local charities in West Berkshire and beyond. They are led by musical director Rosemary Evans and accompanied by Daphne George. Refreshments for the evening were kindly donated by Sainsbury's Newbury and Donnington Valley Hotel and other local companies contributed raffle prizes.

The evening was organised by Emma Woodhead and volunteers supporting the event included Jan Stiff, Katy Hawthorne and Sue Roberts. **Ticket sales and raffle tickets raised a total of more than £1,000 for Swings & Smiles** and ensured that our 2009 fund-raising activities ended on a particularly joyful and triumphant note.



Welcome House Mates

Our chairman Sian Cook and volunteer organiser Jan Stiff spoke about Swings & Smiles to pupils of **Patrick House, Kennet School** at their assembly at the beginning of the school year.

This was at the invitation of Rob Hall, House Captain and Patrick House have now adopted us as their charity for the year. We will update you on news of their activities on our behalf in future issues.

We're Having A Ball!

We have organised a fun-filled evening at the Donnington Valley Hotel and Spa on Friday 7th May 2010.

The evening starts with a 3 course dinner and drinks reception at 7.30pm. We have some exciting auction and raffle prizes on offer and with music from 'The Fab Beatles' and a disco you can dance the night away.

It is being organised by Chris Clacy and his friend Sarah. Please visit www.swingsandsmiles.co.uk for more details and booking forms.



Wise Up On Our Web

Have you looked at our new website? It has been completely revamped by our friends at **Cream Design** and features many new areas of interest to our supporters. It should now be very easy to find out anything you want to know about us, including all our latest news, full details of forthcoming events, opportunities to help and Clare Balding's new video.

Let us know how convenient you find the site and if there are additional features you would like to see. Click on www.swingsandsmiles.co.uk



CONGRATULATIONS!
YOU ARE NOW AT
PEAK, TANZANIA, 5895M AMSL
A'S HIGHEST POINT
S HIGHEST FREE-STANDING MOUNTAIN



'This is the hardest thing I have ever done in my life! Spectacular glaciers and ice cliffs all around. I pretend I am dancing on ice'

She's The Tops

Volunteer **Cathy Flynn** decided to celebrate her fortieth birthday by taking on a massive challenge and in October she did just that to raise funds for Swings & Smiles.

Cathy reached Uhuru Peak, at 5895 metres the highest peak on Mount Kilimanjaro.

On her blog Cathy wrote: 'this is the hardest thing I have ever done in my life! Spectacular glaciers and ice cliffs all around. I pretend I am dancing on ice!'

Well done to Cathy from all of us – and a special thanks for the many hundreds of pounds her birthday challenge has raised for us!

Race Day Drama

Not only was the **Swings & Smiles race day at Newbury in July last year a financial success for us, raising more than £8,800** but it was also even more noteworthy for one of the members of the public attending the event. He was taken ill with a heart attack at the end of racing and was in urgent need of help.

Fortunately, our volunteer co-ordinator Jan Stiff (formerly a nurse at Naomi House) and her husband Graham, West Berkshire Paramedics doctor and a local GP, were still at the course and were alerted to the situation. Trained in the use of defibrillation equipment, which is available at most major sporting venues, Graham and Jan were able to revive the patient and maintain his life systems until an ambulance arrived.

Happily the patient further improved in Basingstoke Hospital and made a full recovery.

Hard Cash From Softball Tournament

The 2009 **Carter Jonas** softball tournament was held in the summer at Newbury Rugby Club and raised £780 for Swings & Smiles.

The organisers were grateful for the support of teams from a number of local firms and rounded off the event with a barbeque and prize-giving.



Generosity From Coin Club

The Coin Club is a group of local businessmen in Newbury and its members undertake great work for charity, Swings & Smiles being their current chosen charity. As a result of the efforts of individual members coupled with collective activity by the club **a cheque for a magnificent £19,750** was presented to Swings & Smiles at a special dinner at The Chequers Hotel.

Once again local business shows how willing it is to put something back into the community!

Boxing Day Duck Race

The Blackbird at Bangor held a successful Duck Race in the village on 26 December.

Liz and Howard English organised the event which raised nearly £500 for Swings & Smiles.



Gnome And Away

The White Stuff store in Reading came up with an innovative fund-raising idea when they gave over their main window to a display of more than 50 garden gnomes which could be adopted for £5 or £10.

The gnomes, and accompanying toadstools, were on show for a couple of months before going to their adoptive homes – **all resulting in a very welcome donation of £675 to Swings & Smiles.**

Help Needed

While we have a band of volunteers who always pull out all the stops to help whenever they can, we are in need of more people to help with the planned events coming up over the next few months. These include a number of events at Sainsbury's Newbury before our year as their charity ends in June and a Ball at the Donnington Valley Hotel in May being organised by Chris Clacy.

Any help you can give will be so appreciated whether it be working in the background or at an event. **If you would like to help or find out more, please contact Jan Stiff at jan@swingsandsmiles.co.uk**

Brasserie Gerard Opening

When Café Uno in the Market Place in Newbury was transformed into the new **Brasserie Gerard**, Swings & Smiles was chosen to be the charity to benefit from the raffle and other fund-raising at the opening reception. The £160 donated was a welcome reminder of a very special occasion.



We're Having A Golf Day!

The inaugural Swings & Smiles Golf day is taking place at the **Sandford Springs Golf Club**, Kingsclere on Friday 3rd September 2010. The day will commence with bacon rolls with a shotgun start at 10am. Following the golf there will be a 2 course carvery lunch. The day will finish with presentations of prizes, auction and raffle.

Cost of a 4 ball team: £260, Individual places: £65

Please visit www.swingsandsmiles.co.uk for a booking form or email Sue Roberts at sue@sraltd.com or call her on 0118 941 9289.

Pound For Life Keyring

Never be without a coin for your supermarket trolley or locker and help support Swings & Smiles raise money.

Priced at just £2, these keyrings are available from Sainsbury's Newbury and Greenacre Leisure Newbury or email info@swingsandsmiles.co.uk



Amy Gets On Her Bike


One of our keenest volunteers is **Amy Green** who recently undertook a cycling challenge with her friend Kerry. Together they biked along a 50k route following The Ridgeway from Swindon. The challenge raised more than £500 for Swings & Smiles and this included a **£150 donation from Amy's employers, Baker Tilly.**

Getting In Touch

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