



Autumn | Winter 2013

News from Megan Baker House MBHousecall

Fundraising Heroes

Going the extra mile



What does MBH do for us? A parents view

Spreading the word about MBH



A pathway to independence

Cover stars...

MBH (Megan Baker House) near Leominster in Herefordshire, currently offers free conductive education for children with cerebral palsy, dyspraxia and other motor related disorders at our centre.

We also offer help to adults with Parkinson's disease or suffering from stroke or head injuries.

Megan Baker House provides a range of sessions delivered by highly qualified and experienced professionals. MBH also provides support to families and carers through advice and information, referrals, befriending and mentoring.

If you would like to know more please contact us.

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Megan Baker House
Conductive Education Centre

Charity number 1141827



This issue's cover stars are (L-R) Judit's husband Denes, Judit and Chloe from MBH

MBH would like to thank Lee Jenkins for design and artwork and ABC Print for the production of this newsletter.

ABC PRINT

WELCOME

"The best one yet" was just one of the comments we received on the previous edition of MBHousecall so not much to live up to then!

This edition is packed with news and articles covering everything MBH – our staff, the children and families who come to us and the fantastic friends who support us. Since the Spring/Summer edition, MBH has continued to deliver its life-changing services to children with a wide-range of motor-disorders and some adults with Parkinson's disease. Conductive education sessions take place at the centre in Herefordshire and through project REACH OUT in Herefordshire and the neighbouring counties of Worcestershire and Gloucestershire. In addition to sessions held throughout the academic year, we also provide intensive block-sessions of one or two weeks.

All of our services are designed to ensure that each child is given the best interventions depending on their condition, abilities and potential – a bespoke service for maximum benefit. Providing such tailored sessions does of course impact on our costs as staff-to-child ratios can be high and this is why the financial contributions from our friends and supporters are vital. MBH is the only centre in the West Midlands to provide its services free-of-charge ensuring there is no financial barrier to accessing our help – life is challenging enough for many of our beneficiaries without the worry of paying fees for vital services not available on the NHS. It goes without saying that parents do make donations to the charity of course, but it remains voluntary. Friends in the local community have continued to raise substantial funds for us, vital to ensure our sustainability into the future – some of their stories can be found in this edition and I hope you will be inspired to also help MBH.

John Gough
Editor

Contents

MBH AT WORK	4
REACHING FURTHER – MBH REACH OUT UPDATE	8
MBH CENTRE NEWS	12
DIARY OF EVENTS	14
FUNDRAISING HEROES	16
EXECUTIVE CHAT	26
MBH – THE STAFF THAT MAKE IT WORK	28





Cerebral Palsy Basic

In July we welcomed back Tiegan and newcomer Hannah, for our Cerebral Palsy Basic block, delivered by lead conductor Judit Ziman and teaching assistant Lauren Sidebotham. Tiegan's mum was thrilled that she was able to return to MBH and Tiegan certainly made the most of the opportunity, working so hard and achieving a great deal during the week. Tiegan was awarded MBH star of the month for July.



(L-R) Judit with Tiegan, Erzi with Iris and work experience student Virag with Ethan and Eliza fishing!

The **Parent & Child Group** has been re-launched which enables parents to work with our conductive education specialists in their child's group. The first week-long session was held in August, with Harry and Finn who are both under two-years old, and their parents were taught techniques they can use at home to continue the amazing progress the boys made during their week at MBH. Unsurprisingly the feedback from Harry and Finn's parents was excellent and well received by staff.

Cerebral Palsy Block

The two-week Cerebral Palsy Block took place in July and August where Eliza, Ellie, Ethan and Iris enjoyed ten-days of intensive sessions. All of them worked hard and that could be seen in their achievements at the end of the course. MBH staff also ensured that the children had lots of fun along with the work!

Primary Block

The Primary block ran during the last two weeks of August. In the first week there were four children - Callum & James (who both attend a block each summer) and then newcomers Iris and Alfie. Iris's sister had attended a block earlier in the summer so she was very excited to be doing what her big sister had done and by the end of the week she was walking with sticks. Alfie was the youngest in the group but loved being with the other children - he lives in Herefordshire and we are hoping we will be able to open a new group which he will suit so he can attend weekly. The second week was for James and Callum (double trouble!!) and both boys worked very hard and achieved some tricky aims they were set.



Abi

We ran another successful Cerebral Palsy Walking block for two children. One travelled from Cornwall and the other all the way from Sweden! The block took place from 5th to the 16th August for four and a half hours each day. Alek had Selective Dorsal Rhizotomy surgery in March 2013 and so this block was important for him to continue his recovery. At the end of the two weeks Alek managed to take 10 steps independently wearing his short splints which had been his aim at the start of the block along with being able to walk into school independently on his first day back after the operation. Abi's challenge was to re-learn how to walk independently with tripod sticks after a long period without using them, due to an operation the previous year. She worked extremely hard during the week and achieved her goal in fine style!



Alek

HUW'S progress

Huw Williams first came to MBH a year ago and since that time he has really improved both his gross and fine motor skills, in fact he has learnt to ride a bike, swim 50 metres and climbed Mount Snowdon! Because of Huw's dyspraxia he has never had the balance to cycle by himself – but this summer that changed! After hours and hours of practice with his dad, Huw has learnt to ride by himself. New skills take longer for Huw to learn and need repetition and patience, but he is a determined boy and always gets there in the end. His parents bought him his first brand new bike, which he loves, and he is planning a sponsored cycle ride very soon.

Mum Liz is a great advocate of the help provided by MBH “Huw has had such a great year because of the two dyspraxia blocks at MBH and the on-going activities that were suggested by Chloe Hicks, his conductor there. But, we think just as importantly, his improvements over the last year are because MBH has supported us as parents and helped us to fight for Huw to get a diagnosis and the support he needs in school. MBH's ethos of developing independence in the children has been an inspiration and helped us to enable Huw to grow into an independent and confident boy. When Huw asks us to do up his buttons or open the tomato sauce, we don't do it straight away for him anymore, we say 'what would Chloe say?' (she would say try it yourself first!). Most importantly Huw loves being at Megan Baker House – he feels happy there, always looks forward to going and loves being with other children in his group.”

I want to ride my bicycle: Huw is making great progress with MBH's help.



Summer Dyspraxia Block

The Summer Dyspraxia Block welcomed two new boys to the group, joining Ewan McConnachie, who has been at MBH since January. All three boys had a fantastic week and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. All of their hard work and determination could be seen in their achievements and successes throughout the week although they especially enjoyed the pirate-themed art and craft session when they became pirates, hunting for treasure!

MBH has now been able to offer a regular, weekly, in-house session to the two new boys and we will be working with Ewan, at his school, through project REACH OUT.



Why are pirates, called pirates?

Just because they Arrrrrrrr!



Children get GREEN FINGERS

It was the beautiful surroundings of the centre that inspired MBH staff to start a gardening project with the children.

The gardening activity was incorporated into the conductive education programmes as it involved the use of fine motor skills to plant the seeds and gross motor skills to get to the garden! The existing raised flower beds were ideal as they were easily accessible for the children and they were able to plant sunflowers, tomatoes and lettuces.

The children were required to stand for long periods of time, which was challenging for them and to get to the garden from the classrooms was quite a distance for some of the children to walk. It was great practise for them walking on uneven surfaces, for some using their sticks and others strived to get there without aid.

As the weeks went by the different groups would take it in turns to water the plants as they grew. The children thoroughly enjoyed the gardening experience and the joy of watching the plants grow.

We would like to say a big 'thank you' to Abigail Tilling as she acquired the plants and seeds by encouraging her local garden centre to donate them.

REACHING FURTHER

In the second year of this three-year project, MBH has been taking its services into schools and community centres for an ever-growing number of beneficiaries. Project **REACH OUT** has now delivered conductive education sessions into eleven schools for 62 children in Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire.

The Parkinson's disease sessions have proved to be very popular and 35 adults have benefited from the classes held at one venue in Worcester – this has exceeded the final project target already by five beneficiaries.



For adults with **Parkinson's disease** an eight-day block was run over a two week period during the first two weeks of August at Perdiswell Leisure Centre in Worcester. It was for participants who used to attend in-house sessions at the centre as well as those from the REACH OUT group in Worcester. The block gave the participants an opportunity to have four sessions over a fortnight. The sessions were run by conductor Annamaria with the help of two teaching assistants - Kay and Becky. It was Becky's first sessions with adult participants which she enjoyed and gained valuable

experience. Two groups attended each day with a total of twenty-one participants benefitting from the intensive programme. One group brought their spouses/partners along to a session to discuss daily living issues and to get solutions to their everyday difficulties (e.g. putting a jacket on or getting up from the floor). Members of another group were given two individual sessions so their spouses/partners could be shown techniques to provide help more effectively when it is most needed.

"Ben and Jake were both diagnosed with Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (Dyspraxia), Verbal Dyspraxia, Oral Dyspraxia and Generalised Hypotonia at the age of 3. We had sought help from the NHS for the boys' speech and physical needs but after a lot of fighting there seemed to be no help available. We were really struggling at the time, the boys were nearly four and due to start school. They could not walk up or downstairs, could not run safely, could not kick or catch a ball, hop, jump or pedal a bike and constantly fell over and bumped into things. They also found the everyday tasks of life, like getting themselves dressed so difficult. Physically they were about 18 months – 2 years behind. They were also unable to communicate with anyone. We felt lucky to have found an amazing private speech therapist to work with the boys but knew we had to do something more to help our little boys. The NHS system

condition than anyone had done before. I was able to tell them my concerns without fear of them thinking I was an over anxious Mom. We were so grateful to them when they offered us an intensive one-week block of conductive education. The development in their physical capabilities within that week was beyond belief and we felt more positive that we could help them reach their full potential. Their balance had improved, they were able to handle a fork and spoon better and had begun to learn how to go up and down stairs, on their feet (not their bums), independently. They were also learning how to dress themselves. The ways in which Megan Baker has benefitted the boys is obvious in all parts of their daily living, but achievements like being able to put on their own socks and shoes, and walk up and down stairs unaided, which their peers would just take for granted, were major milestones for Ben and Jake. The

What does MBH do for us?

Just how much difference can MBH make to improve the futures of the children who receive our specialist services? The parents of Ben and Jake answer this question in their own words.

was strained and although the boys received physiotherapy it was not on a regular basis. We were offered 6 weekly sessions and then a 6 month gap. We were told about Megan Baker House by a lady we met on holiday. She had a son with Dyspraxia who attended MBH and could not speak highly enough of the support they received. She explained how MBH had changed their son's life and as soon as we returned I contacted MBH. We had an assessment within a few weeks and for the first time we felt that we had finally found someone who understood our worries and who cared about our boys' future. The MBH staff explained much more about the boys'

"The ways in which Megan Baker has benefitted the boys is obvious in all parts of their daily living, "

simple tasks that other children find so easy were incredible achievements for them. MBH had also given us something more – hope! We were desperate for the boys to return, we knew how important it was going to be for them. We were lucky enough to be offered one of their weekly sessions and started in January 2009.

We have now been attending MBH, weekly, for nearly four years. In that time, thanks to the dedication of the conductors, our boys have made immense progress and have had more successes than we ever dreamed possible. After being told

by professionals of all the things they probably wouldn't do, with the skill and hard work of the conductors at MBH we are slowly ticking them

off the list. One of their most amazing successes, and one which was also really important to them, was learning to ride their bikes without



Ben

stabilizers. I was so proud of them! We are now able to go on family rides together which we all love. MBH has given them confidence and the self belief that they CAN do it. Their balance, co-ordination and movement have improved greatly. They love sport and are now able to join an after school football club which they get so much enjoyment from. Without Megan Baker House I know this would have not been possible. Their latest achievement was to go on a residential trip with school and take part in abseiling, quad biking, archery, rock climbing, orienteering and zip wire. They also took part in a blindfolded walk along an obstacle course in the forest which they said there was "no way they could have done without Megan Baker", (this being one of the many things they do in their sessions). Not only were they able to do the physical activities they were also able to organise themselves to get dressed and ready for the day with minimal help – something which, a few years ago, seemed an impossible dream.

With further help we can see the time when our boys will be able to lead a 'normal' life. Ben and Jake understand that everything they do at MBH is helping them compete with their peers and this is so important to their confidence. The sessions are full of fun and praise and over the years the boys have built strong relationships with their conductors, who simply are brilliant.

The conductors have been there, with us, supporting us at all of the boys' annual review meetings for their statements, ensuring we get what is best for their education. It is great to have someone on your side who has a wealth of knowledge and is as passionate about your children as you are. We will always be grateful to Megan Baker House for what they have done, for not only Ben and Jake but for us as well. They have not only changed the boys' lives but ours too. As parents we feel very lucky and privileged to have found such a special place to help them. We owe so much of the boys' success to Megan Baker House and cannot recommend them highly enough to any parent looking to help their child."



Jake



CENTRE NEWS

NEW FACES

MBH is delighted to welcome two new members of staff to the conductive education team. Both recent graduates, they have settled into their new positions and are looking forward to developing their skills under the tutelage of lead conductor Judit Ziman.



Bianka Leirer has come to us from Hungary and is excited by the challenges of living in a 'foreign' country "I graduated as a conductor-teacher in June 2013 at the Peto Institute, Hungary. After graduating I decided to move to the UK to work at Megan Baker House. I really

enjoy working here and the new experiences I'm met with every day are fantastic and help me gain more confidence."

Cassie Screen was a volunteer at MBH and the experience guided her career path – much to our benefit! "I graduated from the University of Wolverhampton and the National Institute of Conductive Education in Birmingham in June 2013.



I decided to volunteer at Megan Baker House, having seen and heard about Conductive Education in 2010, to ensure that this was the career path for me and I have been here ever since! My role and responsibilities as a newly qualified conductor bring with it many challenges that I am learning to master, however I am continuing to enjoy developing my professional skills here and having the privilege of meeting some very special and inspiring children."



Colin wows the girls!

Zombies front-man and MBH patron Colin Blunstone and his band gave a stunning performance at Huntington Hall, Worcester in May. Some of the MBH staff were there to see him and thrilled to get the chance to say 'hello'.

(L-R) Becky, Chloe, Lee, Colin, Judit and Zoe

wishlist

If you want to help us but prefer not to jump from a plane, climb a mountain or run a marathon here are some things that the children and staff need...

- Lockable office cupboard
- Mats for the plinths for children and adults
- White drawing paper
- Large door mat for hallway
- Car mats
- Hand Towels (new)
- Magnetic board and magnets (round edge)
- Tissues
- Squash (1 Litre bottles)
- Antibacterial wipes
- Kitchen roll/napkins
- Play Doh
- A4 printer paper
- Stamps
- Envelopes
- Pens, Pencils, Paint Brushes, Rubbers
- Poly pockets
- Black bin liners
- Children's cutlery
- Children's plastic cups and plates
- Non-slip trays

Please contact the centre if you can help.

Team news

Zoe White has been appointed to the role of Office Manager and everyone at MBH sends their congratulations. "In addition to her role as a classroom assistant, Zoe has taken on numerous other tasks and responsibilities over the last year for which I am grateful" said Chief Executive Lee Gough "Zoe is even busier now and it was the right time to recognise her contribution to the organisation and also formalise the Office Manager role to ensure the smooth running of the centre."

Annamaria Berger has left MBH and everyone at the centre wishes her well in whatever she does in the future. The charity is recruiting a replacement conductor to further develop the good work started by Annamaria.

Barry Jones will be leaving the Board of Trustees in December. Barry has been overseeing all financial aspects of the charity, putting in place improved procedures to ensure good governance and the availability of key data for management purposes. "I have enjoyed being part of MBH" said Barry "and wish it every success for the future." Lee Gough is grateful for the time and dedication he has given to the charity "Barry became a trustee not long after my appointment, when we were improving our management processes and procedures. His contribution has been of enormous value and I especially want to thank him for the support he gave me."

MBH is pleased to welcome new trustee **Melanie Baker**, a local business woman and county councillor. Melanie has been very much hands-on in helping with fundraising events and brings a wealth of valuable experience with her to the charity.

diary dates

The MBH Xmas Party Saturday 7th December

Please let Zoe know how many children you are bringing (£2.50 each, paid in advance please) so that Father Christmas can schedule his time efficiently – he has a lot of children to see whilst in the UK!
Everyone welcome!

Come on you Warriors!

We have tickets for the **Worcester Warriors** game on **21st March 2014 at Sixways** – £25 each to include supper. Tickets are selling fast so don't miss-out!

The **MBH 'Black and White Ball'** will be held in **June 2014** – date to be confirmed.



MBH patrons, comedian **Jo Brand** and The Zombies' **Colin Blunstone**, have offered to perform for the charity in 2014.

Plans for the two events are being finalised so watch out for an announcement of the dates – not to be missed!



Please contact Zoe or Julia at MBH for full details.

Spreading the word

New Patron

MBH is delighted that **Professor Tamar Thompson OBE** has become a patron of the charity. Professor Thompson's extensive experience, influence and contacts in the field of health will help MBH to continue building links with more traditional, statutory areas such as physiotherapy. MBH Chief Executive Lee Gough is clearly excited to be working with Tamar "All of us involved in conductive education, beneficiaries and providers, know the dramatic difference it can make but we need to keep getting that message out to a wider audience. I am sure that Tamar will help us to achieve that and as a main-stream health professional, provide valuable advice."

Tamar lives in Malvern and began her career in health as a Nurse, becoming a Ward Sister. She also held roles of Director of Nursing and Quality, Workforce and Service Improvement at two Strategic Health Authorities and an NHS Acute Trust followed by a number of key roles as Assistant Regional Director/Director of Corporate Affairs at the West Midlands Regional Office. She has been a Chief Executive in a Primary Care Trust and in two Ambulance Services. In addition, she was a Professional Adviser for the Parliamentary Secretary for Health. Tamar was a Commissioner on the Prime Minister's Commission into the future of Nursing and Midwifery. She is currently Vice Chair of the Board of Governors at University of Worcester and is Vice Chairman of the National Star College in Cheltenham. A Visiting Professor at London Southbank University and General Council member of the King's Fund, Tamar is also a Director of the Worcestershire Ambassadors and Worcestershire Community Foundation and a Trustee of Malvern Theatres. In 2009 she received an OBE for services to Health Care.

MBH has always been keen to share its experiences and results with the wider community – especially with other agencies and individuals who also provide help and services for those with motor-disorders. With this in mind the charity has made exciting new contacts in the last few months.

Worcester University visits MBH

As part of her drive to extend the charity's contacts and influence beyond the usual conductive education arena, MBH Chief Executive was delighted to welcome **Helen Frank**, course leader physiotherapy, from Worcester University, to visit the centre in August. Lee is clear about the benefits of developing this new relationship "It is no secret that, historically, physiotherapists have not always understood the benefits of conductive education but a good working relationship between the two disciplines will undoubtedly benefit the children we serve. Hopefully this will be the start of a valuable relationship as we learn from each other". Lee has offered the University work experience placements at MBH for their physiotherapy students.

Other visits included two portage workers to explore ways in which we can work with them to provide sessions through project REACH OUT and during July we welcomed 16 year old Virag from Hungry who came for work experience at MBH. Virag, a relative of MBH lead conductor Judit, thoroughly enjoyed her time working with both the staff and children at the centre. She wanted to come to England to improve her English and made great progress during her time with us.

Kim Fisher from Dudley Local Education Authority visited the centre primarily to discuss two children attending a school in her borough. She is now more aware of the services we deliver and is working with us to ensure that the relevant schools are fully informed of the benefits achieved at MBH.

MBH uses a variety of specialist equipment and furniture manufactured by Smirthwaite and we were pleased that a representative from the company came to see us. Our input will inform the design of new products and we will be linked to their new website, signposting visitors to the services available at MBH.

Best practice

Following a request by her mother, a child's private physiotherapist and care team came to observe a session at MBH and are now aware of different techniques they can use at home to help. MBH is keen to spread best-practice at every opportunity.

FUNDRAISING HEROES

We say a special thank you to those people and organisations who have helped raise money for MBH.

Eliza Do-alot!

Eliza Hazlewood has been travelling all the way from Somerset to attend MBH and her parents have been astounded by her rapid progress.

In May Eliza decided to raise some funds for us and took-on an enormous challenge. Eliza's mum, Henrietta takes-up the story "In May this year Eliza, my 7 year old daughter, did a mile run to raise funds for Megan Baker House. She was inspired by the Paralympics the year before and wonderfully supported by her personal trainer, Mel, who is also a marathon runner and gave us the confidence to go for it. We decided to take part in the Glastonbury Fun Run, a local annual event that includes a kid's run of a mile around the centre of the town. There were big crowds and it was a little daunting but there was a real carnival atmosphere which helped. All the other kids were out of sight before we'd got 30 yards of course, but she didn't seem to mind. The bystanders were so encouraging, some of them were in tears watching her marching up the high street with such a look of determination on her little face. Mel fuelled her at regular intervals with water and sweets to keep her energy and spirits up. The response from the crowd was very moving and did a lot to spur her on. It was a seriously long way to walk and even when she was on her

knees with tiredness she hated being given a piggy back and insisted on being allowed to carry on. It meant a lot to her that some of her friends from school and our village were waiting for her at the end and were cheering her on madly. Everyone was so proud of her. It was a very inspiring experience and really showed what's possible when she really sets her mind to something! We used the Just Giving site which was a hassle-free way to get the funds in. She raised £1,200! It meant a lot to her and us that we could give something back to MBH." Eliza had the last word – "It was extremely good and I raised a lot of money. I felt really confident and I was proud of myself." Eliza you are an inspiration.



Eliza taking her marathon effort in her stride

Eggcellent idea from Henry

Henry Amos is still bringing eggs from his happy hens to be sold at the centre for those lucky enough to be visiting or working there.

(I have two every morning – delicious. Ed)

The total he has donated to MBH so far is an incredible £590!

Keep them laying Henry!

FUNDRAISING HEROES

Gourmet Games

In May, **Ann & Tony Roberts**, organised a supper and games evening The Corners Inn at Kingsland. The Inn is well known for its excellent food and stunning interiors so it was no surprise that over 80 people attended. The evening raised **£730** which was magnificent!

Drama at Brimfield

Regular supporters of MBH, **Brimfield Amateur Dramatics Society** have donated a substantial **£425**. The children and staff are extremely grateful for their continued support.

Megan Baker House relies on the help and support of volunteers to work with us at our fundraising events and that need is now greater than ever.

If you have a small amount of time to spare, a lurking hidden talent or a desire to jump out of an aeroplane, we would be very pleased to hear from you. Our events are many and varied and during this year we have done supermarket collections, sponsored walks, supper evenings and garden events so I am sure there is something to suit all.

The MBH website gives details of our up and coming events so if you can help in any way please contact Volunteer Coordinator Julia Higgs or Office Manager Zoe White – they would be really pleased to hear from you.

Please call the centre on 01568 616179 or email Julia@meganbakerhouse.org.uk or zoe@meganbakerhouse.org.uk

Girls Allowed

MBH was kindly given the use of The Bank House Hotel & Golf Club to hold a special 'Ladies Pampering Night' where guests were treated to a range of massages and beauty treatments leaving them invigorated to shop until they dropped for shoes, handbags and luxury household goods.

Driving rain and negotiating fresh tarmac in the car park did not dent the guests' enthusiasm or generosity.

Stall holders kindly donated a percentage of their takings and provided wonderful lots for the 'Chinese' auction. Including a generous donation from Louise of Mews Interiors, the evening resulted in an impressive **£485** for the charity.



Navel gazing

The belly dancing ladies mesmerised the crowds when, once again, they took to the streets of Hereford in full costume and danced for MBH. They raised the ambient temperature and **£160**.

Free radio Walk for Kids

This annual event has grown into a major fundraising event for three local charities. This year it was MBH, Acorns and New Hope who benefitted from the efforts and generosity of the people of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Chief Executive Lee Gough and MBH staff were amazed to see the sheer scale of the event. Lee was asked to say a few words at the start but was not prepared for the numbers of people who had turned-out. "A day I will never forget. Arriving at the Three Counties Showground early in the morning on a very bright and sunny Sunday there was already a 'buzz' on the field as hundreds of people arrived for registration. Many had

gone to great lengths to create amazing costumes – all with a 'green' theme. We had designed a green, MBH, T-shirt with an image of Henry Ford walking with his sticks and the strap-line 'Walk a Mile in My Shoes' and as the start-time



Vlachos family



MBH staff

approached, I was invited to join my colleagues from Acorns and New Hope to speak from the stage. Standing there and seeing a sea of 3,000 faces was an awe-inspiring sight and I was thinking what a privilege it was to be part of this fabulous event! The Vlachos family were also invited onto the stage and Alexandros managed the steps with the help of Dad and then Dad carried Andrea on to the stage. An emotional and compelling speech by Mum gave walkers an insight into the needs of our children and the ways in which we help. As soon as we had helped tidy the field, Zoe, Julia and I set off for the Racecourse in Worcester to welcome the walkers at the finishing line. Many had heart-warming stories of the support they received along the route with people opening their gardens for walkers to take a rest, drinks and refreshments and at the finishing-line everyone was welcomed by cheerleaders, friends and relatives as they received their medals to commemorate the walk. I am extremely grateful to the MBH staff, parents and friends who took part or supported us with their donations."

When the final amounts are collected MBH should benefit by at least **£20,000** and this will enable the installation of an outdoor play area with play equipment, adjacent to the building, allowing us to deliver some services outside in a stimulating environment for the children.

FUNDRAISING HEROES

Ledbury Mayor gets down and dirty

Ledbury Mayor Terry Widdows has chosen MBH to be the Mayor's Charity for 2013 and Sunday 20th October was spent at Eastnor Castle running, crawling and climbing the gruelling six-mile course at this year's Mud Runner event to raise funds for the MBH. Almost 2,500 people took part and Terry completed the gruelling course in less than two hours to cross the finishing before 1,600 other competitors!

Over £300 was raised from Terry's heroic efforts – just one event in a year of fundraising by Terry for MBH, as you can see by the specially-designed 'T' shirts.



Not forgetting...

MBH is also very grateful for the fundraising efforts of...

Shooters Bar, the Women's Institutes of Sutton, Staunton-on-Wye and Leominster, Stoke Prior School, Shobdon Primary School, Whitchurch Primary School, Leominster Pharmacy, Monmouth School, The Naggs Head, Isabelle Wilshaw's nan and many, many more.

The few mentioned here donated **£1,500** between them and the **Big Wine Quiz** at Bishops Frome raised a further **£1,066** – you can see how it all mounts-up for the charity whether as individual donations or from events.

Hall Garth Charitable Settlement, a registered charity has been made aware of MBH by our trustee Roger Taylor and they have donated **£500**

Livvy's lovely scarves - don't forget we have lots of lovely scarves on sale at MBH and so far sales have made **£140** for us. They are a fantastic Xmas present for someone – or even a present to yourself – because you're worth it!

Marathon effort for MBH

Lorraine Brooks, commercial manager at A.B.E Ledbury, fulfilled a lifetime ambition when she took part in the Birmingham Half Marathon in October. 20,000 runners and dry weather produced an upbeat atmosphere and the streets were lined with residents and supporters cheering everyone on. Lorraine trained hard for the event, having had her own health issues to overcome in the last few years everyone at MBH is so proud of her. It is clear from her voice that she enjoyed the challenge "I am thrilled to report that I completed the Birmingham Half Marathon in 2 hours 41 minutes and managed to run every step of the way! Miles 11 and 12 were all uphill and steep in places but fortunately, half way up, was a local lady offering orange squash to whom I will be eternally grateful." Lorraine even had time to stop and spend time with an elderly fan on the way round. She has raised a magnificent **£750** for MBH.



Flying Food

Shobdon Food and Flying Festival, held 29th and 30th June, was an outstanding success again and even the weather behaved! A fantastic weekend unfolded with thousands of visitors attending the enlarged show. We were one of three local charities they were supporting and we received a fantastic **£2,000**

FUNDRAISING HEROES

The Walking Dad!

Ethan Smith's dad Kevin spotted a great opportunity to raise funds for MBH when friend Rob Cooper asked if he knew of any worthwhile charities that would benefit from a sponsored walk he had in mind with fellow walkers Colston Dowling and Ken Burcombe. "Ever since we have been bringing Ethan to MBH I have been meaning to get around to helping to raise some funds to aid towards the great work you do so this was my chance" said Kevin.

"I of course seized the opportunity to suggest MBH due to the great work they have done with Ethan who has Cerebral Palsy. A couple of days later Rob suggested I came along and joined them for the walk. Well how could I refuse, after all they had already put all the groundwork in like finding accommodation planning the route and transportation etc. Rob had even worked out the cheapest pubs in Croyde, which was to be our base. It was too good an opportunity to miss and all I had to do was help the lads raise as much money as possible.

Our route was to be the North Devon Coastal Path from Lynmouth to Westward Ho taking in the spectacular views en route. Unlike myself Rob, Ken and Colston are seasoned walkers with plenty of experience under their belts. I naively imagined walking a couple of miles to work every day would stand me in good stead for this epic hike... how wrong I was!

The first leg was from Croyde to Westward Ho! This was the longest walk, but looking back on it now was in fact by far the easiest as it took in much of the Barnstaple Estuary and Cycle Path which was of course fairly flat. It was basically a warm up for what was to come on the Saturday, a hilly trek from Combe Martin to Croyde. This was physically, undoubtedly one of the hardest things I have ever done. The other lads were very encouraging but for me my fellow walkers were mainly small specs in the distance! We left Combe Martin early in the morning with a gritty determination to reach Croyde. It was an incredibly hot day, but the stunning views kept us going and we were all exhausted but in good spirits when we arrived in Woolacombe. I was under the misguided impression



that Croyde would be just around the corner and the end of the days walk was in sight. With a huge grin on his face Rob happily informed me that I was incorrect in this idea and there was a least another six or seven miles to Croyde! However after a large ice cream and the accompanying massive sugar rush we all staggered into Croyde a couple of hours later. Sunday was the final leg from Lynmouth to Combe Martin. This was the shortest leg of the trip, unfortunately it also consisted of the steepest climbs. By this day we were all tired and suffering from the expected blisters and aches and pains. Due to my lack of training I was particularly stiff and due to the gruelling and sweaty walk the day before had been introduced to a whole new world of chaffing that I won't elaborate on!

Luckily Colston had brought along a lightweight pair of walking sticks which were a massive help as I have doubts that I could have completed the last day without them. As I struggled with my sticks I certainly had an insight (albeit just for one day) into the everyday lives of some of the children and adults that attend MBH on a regular basis. Despite my experience with Ethan this turned out to be a real eye opener for me as at some points I had a job to put one leg in front of the other, particularly on the steep downhill stretches. It made me realise how hard it must be to have to face these mobility issues day in day out. All in all it was an amazing experience made even more enjoyable by the fact we managed to raise over **£1000** between us for a fantastic charity."

Cob House Car Boot

In June, Zoe's father kindly allowed us to use his van to take our items to the sale. We loaded the 'Whites Roofing' van with all of the donated items from parents and supporters of MBH and headed To Cob House near Worcester which is a popular venue with young families – it's worth looking at their website – www.cobhouse.org – to see the range of activities on offer.

We were their chosen charity for the day and the car boot fees were donated to us which, along with the items we sold, raised **£100**. Cob House was a fabulous venue and the owners have kindly offered us the use of their grounds for another fundraiser.

Swingers Help MBH

Chris Harrison, captain of the Herefordshire Golf Club Seniors has been fundraising for MBH with various events this year and so far has raised a magnificent **£600**.

Chris, may your ball always fly true and thank you from everyone at MBH.

Local teams race for Pole Position!



Winner from the morning session: 1st E-response, 2nd Hallmark Hulme Startin, 3rd Thursfields Solicitors

Local businesses came together on 17th October to see who had the skill and endurance to reach pole position. Hayward Wright Chartered Accountants put together a race day in aid of Megan Baker House sponsored by Hills Ford in Kidderminster and Malvern.

Alistair Druett, Director at Hayward Wright said "We decided to put on a fun day for local companies to help raise funds for a local charity Megan Baker House. We were originally going to put on an afternoon race but due to the demand, we sold out in 10 hours, we put on a morning race as well."

Eighteen teams took part in the endurance race over two hours at AKS Karting in Norton, Worcestershire. With a silent

auction for grid positions and the opportunity to purchase black flag stops for other teams as well.

The winner of the morning session was E-response Recruitment and the afternoon session was won by HSBC.

"The day could not have gone better and it was great to see the friendly completion amongst the teams. AKS Karting were a great help in arranging the day and ensuring everybody stayed safe whilst having fun. Most importantly we raised a staggering amount due to the generosity of the teams who took part" said Alistair Hayward-Wright owner of Hayward Wright Chartered Accountants. The day raised a total of **£1440**.

FUNDRAISING HEROES



Michael Kalisperas handing a cheque for £500 to Lee Gough

'Vassillis's Plight' was featured in "That's Life" magazine and the family were given £1,000 for the article.

Lee Gough is very grateful for the donation but even more pleased to see Vassillis at the centre.

They spent half of the money on sensory equipment for Vassillis and decided to donate **£500** to MBH.

Lee Gough commented "Vassilli is such a star. Despite his dreadful disabilities he is always cheerful when he comes to MBH and responds to the many tasks we have set him. He was able to stand for his first birthday and there was not a dry eye in the centre that day! We will continue to help him achieve as much independence as possible."

Michael Kalisperas, Vassillis's dad said "I just wanted to let you know that we appreciate all you do for him and hope he continues his progress at Megan Baker House as he has. We mentioned MBH in the article".

In August, **Laura Preece** organised a charity rounders match at Ludlow Cricket Club. Proceeds were split between us and one other charity. **The £515 raised on the day will be matched by Barclays so MBH will receive £515 – well done Laura!**

No talking for Georgia

By completing a sponsored silence, chatter-box Georgia stayed silent for the whole day which showed great determination and resulted in **£200** for the charity – thank you Georgia from everyone at MBH.



Let the train take the strain!

In mid-May MBH was invited to hold a fundraising day at the privately owned Kyre Valley Railway. Children, parents, staff, trustees and friends of MBH gathered to enjoy this very special place. Trustee Len Vidlar was moved to record the event in words.

"Picture, if you can, a beautiful part of the Worcestershire countryside where a private drive rises gently uphill for about half a mile, is bounded on three sides by woodland showing every possible shade of green and where no houses, pylons, or other manifestations of the modern age are to be seen. It is a Saturday in mid May, Spring is late in coming but now seems to be making up for lost time. The sky, whilst not clear, has clouds at such a height that the rain of the previous week is unlikely to trouble the tranquillity of the scene. That tranquillity is enhanced by the calls of wood pigeon and cuckoo which echo around the



trees as if to confirm that this is indeed a special place. And now, as if by magic, a sort of "rattling" sound can be heard somewhere amongst the trees and soon a column of white steam shoots upwards only to be followed by that sound, so familiar in those western films, which heralded the arrival (usually around a bend in the track) of a magnificent locomotive, in "full steam". This, however, is not a full scale loco but a scaled down version, no less magnificent, with rolling stock carrying supporters of Megan Baker House having the time of their lives. We were invited by the owners and volunteers who run this narrow gauge steam railway, near Tenbury Wells, to enjoy ourselves for a day of fun. We are all children at heart and it showed on the faces of everyone there as each train pulled out of the station, or waited in a siding to let another pass. It was a truly magical day."

£740 was raised on the day.

Phoenix cards are still on sale at MBH inclusive of Christmas stock. We receive a donation from all sales so please check-out what stock we have! You can also place new orders through Sharon (details at MBH) and we will receive a donation from her.

EXECUTIVE chat

MBHousecall would not exist without the kindness of graphic designer Lee Jenkins and ABC Print and it is due to their generosity that a charity like ours can have such an impressive magazine.



There are, of course, so many other people to thank for their continuing support and doing such amazing things for us.

My abiding memory will be of the sea of faces I saw from the stage at the start of the Free radio 'Walk for Kids' – a fantastic day with perfect weather and so many lovely people en route, opening their gardens to offer food, drink and rest.

Then there was Kevin, walking the Devon coast for us, Terry (Mayor of Ledbury) taking part in Mud Runner for MBH, Lorraine taking part in her first run since overcoming a debilitating illness and running the Birmingham half-marathon for us.

Many children have persevered with great determination to overcome their difficulties and watching them work is so inspiring. Just one example is Huw who can now ride his bicycle for the first time thanks to the support he has received from the staff at MBH and his parents.

The fundraising stories of wonderful people doing amazing things for us shows community support at its best and adds considerably income towards the £450,000 we need each year to operate the services at the centre, (not to mention the additional £200,000 needed to run the REACH OUT project which is funded by BIG Lottery).

I am thrilled that the Mayor of Ledbury, Terry Widdows, has chosen us as his charity of the year and will be very much 'hands-on' with his fundraising – just look at the Mud Runner article!

So many people do so much for us so a huge 'thank you' to everyone who has run, walked, rolled, cycled, provided lovely suppers for friends, held sponsored silences and many more activities to raise our profile as well as much needed funds.

With Christmas approaching, we have a packed programme for the Christmas party on December 7th – let Zoe know if you would like to come and bring children.

Next year, we once again have rugby tickets for the game on March 21st at Worcester Warriors, at £25 each for entrance and supper they will go quickly. A 'Black and White' ball will be held in June and Jo Brand and patron Colin Blunstone of the Zombies will also be performing for us. Dates will be on the web site as soon.

A huge 'THANK YOU' to the charitable trusts that support us, the MBH staff who continue to deliver services of the highest quality and everyone who has helped us – there are many, many more who are not mentioned in this newsletter.

Lee Gough
Chief Executive



Judit Ziman
Lead Conductor



Lee Gough
Chief Executive



Becky Griffiths
Teaching Assistant



Zoe White
Teaching Assistant



Chloe Hicks
Conductor



Lauren Sidebotham
Teaching Assistant

THE STAFF WHO MAKE IT WORK



Julia Higgs
Volunteer Co-ordinator



Cassie Screen
Conductor



Erzsebet Majorovics-
Moorcroft
Conductor



Bianka Leirer
Conductor