

A4H News...

www.aspergers4herts.org Issue 4

Cashing in on Knitting!



Teresa Roffey has raised nearly £2,000 for Aspergers 4 Herts through her impressive knitting, and persistent hard work.

Teresa, age 77, lives in Cheshire, and has no family or friends affected by Asperger syndrome, so why is she involved with A4H? Teresa explains, 'I've always done a lot of work for charity, and when my daughter, Suzanne, became a trustee of A4H, I wanted to do something to support them.'

Despite having mobility problems, Teresa travels across Manchester to buy wool from a market stall-holder who gives a discount for the charity. She also plans her stock carefully, knitting scarves, hats and Christmas gifts in the winter, and then switching to bags, toys and novelties in the summer. She's always on the look-out for new patterns, but also designs some of the items herself. Teresa and her daughters have sold a lot of the knitting through craft fairs, in Cheshire and Hertfordshire, and they've held coffee mornings and sold some to family and friends.

It's amazing to think that so many people – not just Teresa and her family, but those supplying the wool and buying the knitting – are helping to raise funds for Aspergers 4 Herts. When asked what keeps her knitting, Teresa said, 'I like knowing that all the money I raise goes straight to the people who need it,' and we're all very grateful that she does. If you've got any fund-raising ideas, please let us know – we're always glad to hear from our members.



Autism in the News

The Government issued a call for training and adjustments to mental health services to meet the needs of children and adults with autism on 2nd February. The call came as part of the [new mental health strategy for England](#) – No Health, Without Mental Health. Although autism is not a mental health problem, many children with autism have mental health problems. Some of these problems would be

preventable if the right support was provided all too often this is not the case. It is essential that professionals are trained and able to adjust talking therapies for people with autism so that mental health issues can be tackled effectively. The NAS launched its [You Need To Know campaign](#) in 2010, which aims to tackle the mental health system that currently fails two thirds of children with autism. The full

report can be read [here](#).

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) published their draft guideline on improvements to NHS autism diagnostic services for under-18s in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on 28th January. These include vital proposals on improving diagnosis and post-diagnostic support, such as appointing a case coordinator for each young person and their family, and creating a profile of each young person who has a diagnosis, outlining their needs.

Asperger syndrome – Difference or disorder?

Louise Elman, *The Psychologist* February 2011; vol 24, no 2: p114-117

An article discussing how those with Asperger syndrome should be viewed by society was published in a journal called *The Psychologist* in February. The author, Louise Elliman, a PhD student at Leeds Metropolitan University, begins by pointing out that although AS is generally considered to be a developmental disorder, those affected often have associated strengths, such as superior attention to detail. She argues that the disability of AS doesn't exist for the individual unless they come into contact with others in society, and it's mixing in society that creates barriers, like unclear non-verbal signals and non-specific instructions.

The author explains how the use of the internet has allowed people with AS to form groups and claim a voice in society. A member of an AS self-advocacy group said, *'The computer is kind of like what sign language is for the Deaf. It's the autistic way of communicating.'* Additionally, virtual-reality software has been used by people with AS or autism to practise and

improve their social skills.

As many of the on-line community call themselves Aspies or Aspergic rather than a person with AS, this may show that they view AS as a fundamental part of who they are rather than something they have. Plus, some are strongly critical of those seeking a cure for AS – which would remove a fundamental and often positive aspect of their identity, although not all hold this view.

However, as Louise points out, there are advantages to seeing AS as a disability, in that it puts the emphasis on society to remove the barriers for those with AS, rather than expecting them to change and conform to what society expects. It can also be used to make a political agenda for social change. Although she warns that labelling AS as a disability can lead to discrimination and cause depression or anxiety for those affected, leading to greater difficulties in social interaction.

In concluding, the author says she believes the experiences of those with AS is caused by an interaction of the neurological impairment and the environment with which they come into contact. You can find the full article at www.thepsychologist.org.uk/archive

A4H Featured charity

Waitrose

During April, Aspergers 4 Herts is one of the featured charities at Waitrose Hitchin and Stevenage. Each time you shop in Waitrose you will receive green tokens which can be used to nominate your charity for a funding award. Each of the three charities in the running will be given a share of the available monthly funds, with the share being proportional to the number of tokens awarded. The voting boxes for your tokens are usually just as you leave the till area, so come on and support us by shopping at Waitrose!!



“Ahhrrrr... I hate the word social”

Are you sick of hearing your parent, relative or partner say “you need to socialise more”? When I was recently attending a so called ‘social activity’ for Aspies I was introduced to a charming young man called Harry who immediately informed me in a very frank manner “How do you do, I’m Harry.” He proceeded to shake my hand and announce “I don’t like social events, people make me feel really uncomfortable; I don’t know what to say to them and some people are really horrible”. I had a pretty in-depth discussion with Harry about his thoughts on people, and how he was bullied at school. He really is a fantastic individual to listen to, with a lot of interesting things to say and a very big heart.

Well, I’ve thought about that conversation so much since Harry and I had it, and I must admit I totally agree with him!

It brought back a mass of bad memories! As a teenager I was made to get out and socialise and

although that was in the 1980’s, to this day I remember the utter fear of walking through the door of the local youth club not knowing the routine or what was expected of me, and the anticipation that I would be confronted with people on the other side! Once I’d got myself to go through the door, there was always such a mass of people and loud noise! People that weren’t my family, some that to me seemed aggressive, some dancing (never understood that one at all), some smoking, but all, in my opinion, scary and not like me! And worse of all, there was nothing to do but TALK!! Well talking to people was not something I did, so I would inevitably end up parked on a chair just watching the strange exchanges between those other people that seemed so different to me.

The truth of the matter is,

you don’t have to be sociable or talk to people very much, to interact and do certain so called ‘sociable activities,’ like taking a bike riding, horse riding or rock climbing. Many people that find socialising easy push the social idea without a thought for the connotation of what that word may mean to those of us that find interaction with others very “uncomfortable”!!

Well, all this has made me think!! Aspergers 4 Herts needs to investigate putting together at least one activity on a regular basis where you can do something

enjoyable with other like-minded people but not have to interact verbally a great deal if you don’t want

to. An activity where you do your own thing around others that have Asperger syndrome but if you don’t want to talk to anyonejust don’t!

Investigations are under way to see what we can come up with.

Thank you...

A4H

British 10k

Have you ever thought of running to raise money for Autism? If like me, you think “actually the idea of my doing a 10k run is ridiculous, I never runnot even for a bus”, I am guessing the reply would be “no way”. Having persuaded many people to do different fund raising events, I thought it was time to put my money where my mouth is. Can’t believe I have actually agreed to do this! The training is far easier than you would imagine and frankly if I can... anyone can!

Over 25,000 runners, including top athletes and celebrities, take part in the British 10k. Based in London, this prestigious run starts at Hyde Park Corner and proceeds down Pall Mall taking in Trafalgar Square and Embankment before its final leg along Whitehall. Support for the hundreds of charities involved is always strong; groups of supporters line the course to cheer runners on. Each year the event has been a sellout.

The cost of entry is £15, for which you will receive a photo and chip timing. All we ask is that you raise £100 for Aspergers 4 Herts. If you are tempted to join us, we still have places for the British 10k and there is still time to train. Click [here](#) and let us know!

