



NEWSLETTER

A tribute to an Autism Champion

By Sarah Faulkner

Hi everyone. In this issue, I wanted to pay tribute to an extraordinary lady in the world of Autism, Dr Lorna Wing, who sadly she passed away earlier this year. She was one of the founders of The National Autistic Society (NAS). In the 1970's she developed the concept of Autism being a 'spectrum condition'. In 1981 she produced an academic paper that popularised the research of Hans Asperger and in it she coined the term 'Asperger syndrome'. She revolutionised the way in which Autism is viewed all over the world. As well as carrying out research she was the mum of a child with Autism. Dr.Wing always advocated for better services for people with Autism and their families. She was known to be a very giving person who always made time for others who had questions. The National Autistic Society said that they "owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Dr Wing and the fierce intellect, compassion and insight she brought to her ground-breaking work. She will be greatly missed." I was lucky enough to have met Dr.Wing briefly a few years ago at an Autism event. During informal conversation, the subject of Autism and controversial US-based research into 'finding a cure' came up. I can distinctly remember Dr.Wing giving a wry smile and simply stating, "we will always have people with Autism".



ASSERT activities update

We have had some really fun activities over the past couple of months.

In October we held a craft evening here at Community Base, there was a great turn out and it was a busy evening with lots of great craft being produced, there were decoupage coasters and flower pots, homemade fridge magnets and even some homemade personalised wrapping paper! Definitely one to be done again!

November's activity was a board games night which was just brilliant, we had some serious backgammon being played and Stephen Robinson even made his own board game which he brought along for us to try out!

We have a cookery class in January to look forward to (If you are interested please let Kat know)

If you have any ideas for activities please email Kat at activities@assertbh.org.uk

Autumn Photo Competition

Congratulations to Luc Rae-Smith on winning the Autumn photo competition! Here is his colourful entry, taken from a bus! Well done Luc, we will give you your prize next time we see you.



Member submissions for the newsletter needed! If you have an article, story, poem, or just a general musing on life that you would like to be considered for submission to the newsletter, please send it in! It can be on any topic, how about your special interest? Please email these to Laura at laura@assertbh.org.uk

ASSERT AGM & MEMBERSHIP

By Sarah Bourne

The Assert AGM will be taking place at Community Base on Friday 20th February at 7.30pm. We will undertake the AGM and this will be followed by a guest speaker and then some time for open questions/ comments. There will be a free buffet and the opportunity to renew your membership. If you are not already a member of Assert, this is a great opportunity to become a member and show your support for Assert. The AGM provides us with the opportunity to share with you our successes and developments over the past year and to inform you of future areas of development and work. It's also an opportunity for you to tell us how you would like to see our work develop in the future.

Assert Membership

At November's Trustee's meeting it was decided that Assert would increase the cost of membership. For many years the cost has been £8 for individual membership and £10 for a family membership. This year's membership fees will increase to the following;

£10 individual one year membership

£15 one year family membership

Upcoming Assert activities

All dates TBC, but here are a few things you can look forward to in 2015

- **Cookery lesson**
- **Residential trip**

If you are interested in taking part in any of these activities, or you have any ideas for future activities please contact Kat on

activities@assertbh.org.uk

WALKS WITH ASSERT By Catherine Neville

I would like to give you all the chance to choose where we go for some of the walks in 2015. Have you been on a lovely walk and think other people would like to go too?

When you are thinking about where you would like us to go, you will need to consider the following:

- it is accessible by bus (This is essential)
- the bus journey takes less than hour
- there is a good meeting point that is easily identifiable
- the walk takes between 1hour 30 minutes and 2 hours

Please email me at lifeskills@assertbh.org.uk with your thoughts and suggestions



Why shouldn't you stay too close to a Christmas tree? You'll get Tinselitis

What did the fireman give to his daughter? He put a ladder in her stocking

How did Jesus feel after he was given gold and myrrh? He was incensed

Why does Simon Cowell keep going to the bathroom at Christmas? He keeps getting a Christmas No.1

An expression of autism through graphic art

By Stephanie Clay



One late September evening upwards of thirty people were crammed into the stuffy upstairs room at The Cricketers in Black Lion St. We had all come to hear Laura Malacart being interviewed about her graphic novel featuring Kyle, a non-verbal autistic man from Cornwall who is a professional singer. Laura is primarily a filmmaker with a strong interest in language but she felt that the format of a graphic novel was more suited to expressing the reality of Kyle's world. She did not want to make a film where others spoke for and about Kyle but his voice could not be heard. Although the project was funded by the Wellcome Foundation Laura has no money for a print run so for now you can only read the novel online. Please visit the links below, as well as the novel there are video clips on the making of the novel. You can hear Kyle sing here

<http://kylecoleman.co.uk>

http://www.lauramalacart.info/laura_malacart/non_verbal.html

<http://www.non-verbalautism.blogspot.co.uk>

The Curly Hair Project

<http://thegirlwiththecurlyhair.co.uk>

The curly hair project (CHP) is a social enterprise with worldwide appeal dedicated to support females with Asperger's Syndrome and autism.

The curly hair project is not just a set of books. It is a collection of writings, pictures and a community, working harmoniously to "tell the tale of an outsider trying to fit into a world and learning what it is to be human...and having the world learn about her." They want to expand the enjoyment of each other's special perspectives. Through their characters,

"the girl with the curly hair" and her neuro-typical counterpart, our purpose is to describe their daily life experiences and challenges, in a clear and quirky way. Visit the website above for more information.



ALEX WINS A LEARNER OF THE YEAR AWARD AT CITY COLLEGE BRIGHTON AND HOVE!

Alex moved to Brighton from France with his family in 2013, he enrolled at City College Brighton and Hove to study a short course in English during the summer, but then moved on to a full time Film course in September. Alex was dedicated to his learning from the very beginning, engaging with staff well, and using the support he was offered fully. Alex was supported by several Teaching Support Assistants in class and by an Intensive Personal Adviser weekly, who all described Alex as 'a pleasure to work with', but it was Alex's excellent attendance and enjoyment of learning that gained him his award. Alex attended every Functional Skills English class during the year, he worked hard on both his written and spoken English, and overcame the barrier of English being his third language. When college staff were asked to nominate their learners of the year, Alex's name came up repeatedly, but it was decided that Alex had made the most progress in English and so he was awarded learner of the year for this subject. Alex and his family were thrilled when they were informed of his win, and Alex was very excited to attend the ceremony with his Mum and Karen Manghan, who was his Intensive Personal Adviser at college. As you can see, Alex was very happy to receive his award, and very much looked the part of award winner in his suit and bow tie! Alex has returned to City College Brighton and Hove to study a Vocational Skills course, he is still supported by Karen Manghan as an Independent Mentor, and is looking forward to meeting lots of new friends through ASSERT.



Benefits Update By Laura Priestnall, Benefit Liaison Worker



As usual I have been very busy with lots of benefit enquiries, the last few months I seem to have mainly been focusing on PIP support. This has included new applications, and also supporting people with appeals. If you don't get awarded what you feel is a fair amount, let me know and I will try to help you write to the DWP to appeal their decision. As usual, if you get an appointment or form you want help with, please let me know and I will always try to help.

Council Tax Exemption Thanks to an ASSERT member (you know who you are!) I have managed to get a blank form for applying for council tax exemption, so I can now send these to members. I have also drafted a letter for you to take to your GP to ask for the exemption. So far 5 members have gained exemption. Email me at laura@assertbh.org.uk if you would like me to send you the blank form and GP letter.

As well as doing benefit support, I also do casework alongside Sarah F. As I work part time hours, it can sometimes take me a little while to respond to email and phone enquiries. Please be patient if you have sent me a query, I will get back to you as soon as I am able to.



Sarah B photobombing Neil



Guess the ASSERT member! Who was making creative use of the party hats at the Christmas meal?



Is it an elf? Or Sarah F?



Yay! Dinner!

Much fun was had at the Assert Christmas meal in early December, with over 40 people turning out to enjoy a meal and catching up with friends. Food critic Stephen O'Kane had this to say about the food: " it wasn't bad enough for me to make any amusing comments or indeed to spit any of it on to the floor. 8/10. " Merry Christmas from us all at Assert! See you in 2015.