

**Reading and
West Berkshire
Branch**

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*Our very own
Gill -
Pride of
Bracknell!*

Read more about a tribute to a very special person in the next issue!



NEWBURY MP SUPPORTS FIGHT AGAINST MND

A Berkshire MP is backing the MND Association’s major new campaign to get Government funding for vital research work.

Richard Benyon MP has called on the Department of Health to pledge £7.5 million to help those people living with the debilitating fatal disease.

The Association is also asking all its supporters to write to Prime Minister Tony Blair urging him to commit to funding research which could lead to a world free of MND.

Chief Executive Dr Kirstine Knox said in a New Year message YOUR help was critical if the campaign was to succeed.

The deadline for letters is February 7th when No 10 Downing Street is hosting a reception for the Association.

She wrote: “We hope the Government will indicate whether it will invest in MND research at the reception. We now need to make one last push to secure Government support.”

Mr Benyon, whose uncle died from the disease, is supporting the Association’s bid to ringfence the funds which would be matched through its new MND Research Foundation.

This is a pioneering initiative that aims to raise £15 million over five years to support national and international research efforts to end MND.



Richard Benyon MP with Dr Kirstine Knox.

One of the Foundation’s flagship projects is a Whole Genome Scan in MND. This will support a major international genetic research collaboration which could revolutionise research into the disease. By scanning the human genome scientists hope to identify specific genetic mutations that might be involved in the development of the disease.

New Association President Lembit Öpik has led the campaign which has involved two meetings with the Prime Minister and the health minister responsible for research.

The MND Association wants to see a world free of MND and with the support of MPs, such as Richard Benyon, it is hoped this vision can become a reality.

Dr Knox’s letter and details of where you can write are on page 3.

Pupils from six Berkshire primary schools took part in a fun sports challenge to raise money for MND. The children, helped by their enthusiastic coaches from Prime Sports, collected £806 from their antics at various after school clubs. See back page for full story....

BEHIND THE TILLS AT DEBENHAMS

Volunteers went behind the tills at Debenhams in Newbury before Christmas to raise awareness of MND.

The enthusiastic team worked hard helping to pack bags during two of the store's spectacular shopping days.

Store manager Helen Thomas has pledged a cheque for £300 as thanks for the branch's efforts. Kind hearted shoppers also made the collecting boxes jingle with a total of £137 in loose change.

Ms Thomas said staff and managers were really grateful for the help over the busy two days of festive shopping.

She wrote: "Please pass on my appreciation to all of your volunteers. We are delighted to be able to support such an excellent and worthwhile charity."

The Association's link with the store came through 18-year-old Reading University student and part-time supervisor Laura Clintworth whose grandfather Graham Hodgetts died from MND.

In September Laura persuaded her bosses to support the charity which helped Graham and his family and was invited to set up an awareness stand in the store. She and her grandmother Maureen Hodgetts made such an impact they were invited back for the festive event.

Laura said afterwards: "Everything we did in Debenhams raises awareness of the disease. We didn't know about it when Graham was diagnosed until we met up with the MND Association.

"Quite a few people came up to us and said that they knew someone who had had MND. Debenhams has been very supportive."

The event also led to publicity in the Newbury Weekly News the following week – an invaluable opportunity to raise the profile of the MND Association.

Contributed by Jane Gilbert



Debenhams -
"Life from the
other side"?
By Gill Cheetham

At Debenhams two charity days, in early November, some of us had an opportunity to sample 'Life from the other side'!

Volunteers assembled in early and afternoon shifts, were allocated to a cash point, and had to do their stuff, packing goods, offering hangers, and free goodies to people bearing store cards.

We placed our tins in obvious positions to encourage shoppers to be generous, regarding our volunteer status, although the general public believed us to be part of the set-up.

Several hours later, having answered questions ranging from 'would you direct me to the toilets?' To 'Where is the toy department?' we had discovered how it feels to work in a departmental store.

In spite of aching feet, and tiredness from hard work, experiencing first hand the operation of a large shop was both interesting and educational, we had a jolly good time!

Contributed by Gill Cheetham

THANK YOU TIMPSON



Our picture shows Eric presenting his cheque to treasurer Barry Clouting in 2006.

Timpson, the nationwide chain of shoe repair shops, has kindly sponsored our Thank You Lunch on January 28th to the tune of £200.

One of its employees, Eric Roden, from Thatcham, is among those invited to the event following his

fantastic fundraising for the branch.

Eric, who is manager of the shop in Northbrook Street, Newbury, collected £936 from generous customers and then heard his boss John Timpson was going to make it up to nearly £3,000.

Now Mr Timpson, chairman and chief executive of Timpson Ltd., has made a further donation to help people living with MND.

He wrote: "I am delighted that Eric Roden is taking such an avid interest in this cruel disease."

Full coverage of the Thank You Lunch will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Contributed by Jane Gilbert

And a plea from Gill...

Sometimes I spend needless time and money on telephone calls, and waste time waiting for responses.

If you are willing to help out -often at short notice- at collecting venues, or selling opportunities that arise within our region, usually in your locality, please e-mail your contact details to me at gillcheetham@btopenworld.com.

This will enable me to communicate effectively and quickly, particularly when I require people in a specific area.

Gill Cheetham

Motability

Powered Wheelchair and Scooter Scheme
Contact Motability on 0845 60 762 60
or www.motability.co.uk
for more information

The Association Needs Your Help, Today!

Campaigning for Government Funding of MND Research –

First, may I offer you and your loved ones my very best wishes for the New Year. I am writing today because I and the Association urgently need your help.

You may be aware that the Association is campaigning hard for increased Government funding of MND research. We want the Government to commit £7.5 million to the much needed research that will help us find the causes of, and effective treatments for MND.



To date our campaign has been led by the Association's President Lembit Öpik MP.

We have met twice with the Prime Minister, obtained significant support from MPs, and met a number of

times with the Health Minister responsible for research. No. 10 Downing Street is hosting a reception for us on 7 February 2007. We hope that the Government will indicate whether it will invest in MND research at the reception.

We now need to make one last push to secure Government support for our campaign. We need your help.

We would like you to take a moment, today, to write to the Prime Minister to thank him for his support so far and to urge him to commit Government funds of £7.5 million to MND research.

Your help is **critical** if our campaign is to succeed, and we are to get funding into MND research which will lead to a world free of MND. Your letter will help us put as much pressure on the Government between now and 7 February 2007 as we possibly can.

Your letters should be addressed to:

Rt Hon Tony Blair MP,
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

Or you can e-mail the Prime Minister through the No10 website:
www.number-10.gov.uk

If you do write to the Prime Minister, it would be very helpful if you could either post me a copy of your letter, or e-mail me a copy at letter2tony@mndassociation.org.

As always, both I and the Association am very grateful for your help and support.

With warmest regards

**Dr Kirstine Knox,
Chief Executive,
Motor Neurone Disease
Association**



SEASON'S GREETINGS

Two Berkshire firms made festive donations to help people living with MND instead of sending Christmas cards.

Fryer Holt, Reading-based commercial property consultants, has given the branch £250 worth of seasonal good cheer.

It was one of 75 nationwide property firms represented in a Christmas Greetings feature in the December issue of Estates Gazette. Each firm listed made a donation to the charity of its choice raising a grand total of £82,890.

Derek Gilbert, a partner of Fryer Holt, chose the MNDA to benefit in memory of his mother-in-law who died from the disease seven years ago.

A Hungerford public relations company opted to send all its cards via email and gave what would have been spent on cards and postage to

charity.

Nigel Morgan, who founded Morgan PR four years ago, explained: "I could have sent charity Christmas cards but this just seemed a much better idea."

Mr Morgan gave £100 each to the MND Association, in memory of his father, Taffy Morgan, and the Newbury Weekly News Over 80s Christmas Parcel Fund.

He does a lot of work with the Newbury Weekly News Group and wanted to help its appeal.

In turn, he and Fryer Holt also generated publicity from their generous donations which raised vital awareness of MND and the profile of the Association.



Contributed by Jane Gilbert



CHRISTMAS CHEER Recollections by Val Pearson

Recently, the first sign of Christmas arrived with the annual round of Christmas Fairs. Joanna Knott and I ran a stall at the Pangbourne Charity Fair, selling Christmas cards and Joanna's home-made biscuits (which I can heartily recommend!).

Peter Howgego, who lost his wife Gill this year to MND, made a special trip with his grandson Dominic to visit the stall. He arrived wearing his Hokey Cokey badge and brought a wave of laughter with him. Each time he was asked by the curious, he replied – 'that's what it's all about', adding 'laughter is the lubricant of life'.

Our success at Pangbourne was followed up later that month with a stall at the

Wokingham Christmas Fair. Our Association Visitor, Jan, was a very valuable addition to the team and the Wokingham dogs appeared on their best behaviour, dressed up to the nines, one with a festive tartan neckerchief.

The new tombola was a great success and the band played cheerfully throughout, warming up to a crescendo with the Christmas carols round the tree in the market square at the end of the day. The trees glowed in the dusk with multi-coloured lights and everyone sang their hearts out. It was a cheerful end to an interesting day.

Our thanks to the organisers of both events.

CARTWHEELING CAPERS

Pupils from six Berkshire primary schools took part in a fun sports challenge to raise money for MND. The children, helped by their enthusiastic coaches from Prime Sports, collected £806 from their antics at various after school clubs.

Each of them was asked to collect sponsors for the challenges which ranged from cartwheels to basketball, obstacle relay, rugby passing and tennis target.



Our picture shows a group of eight and nine-year-old young gymnasts from Hawkedon Primary School, Lower Earley, with Prime Sports managing director Michael Vinluan, and Margaret Moss and Jane Gilbert from the local MNDA Branch, after their cartwheel challenge.

Michael was thrilled with their efforts. He said the children rose to the challenge and exceeded their fundraising target. He said: "It's really good news. The children loved it and really got into it. The result was better than we had hoped for."



Michael, aged 24 and from Earley, also works as an events host at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel, Padworth, where the Association holds its monthly branch meetings courtesy of the hotel. It was because of this connection that Prime Sports chose MND to benefit from its first charity challenge.

Hawkedon Primary School was awarded a lottery grant that enabled it to hire Prime Sports to run the after school activities for two years. The children are charged a nominal fee to attend each session.

One young boy at Hawkedon Primary School raised an impressive £125 and will receive a Prime Sports T shirt as thanks for his efforts.

Other schools taking part in the various challenges were Keep Hatch Primary, Wokingham, Earley St Peter's C of E, Robert Piggott Infant and Junior Schools, Wargrave and Micklands Primary School, Caversham. *Contributed by Jane Gilbert*

Forthcoming Events

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| Grand Charity Sale Chute Pavilion Sherborne St. John | Fri 26th January 10am-4pm |
| Entrance £3.00 inc. coffee | |
| Drop-in Meetings | Mondays 11.30-2.30pm |
| Thatcham Baptist Church Reading area-venue TBA Charles Clore Day Centre | 19th February 19th March 23rd April |
| Thank you Lunch Ufton Court, Ufton Nervet (invitation only) | Sun 28th January |
| MND Association AGM | Wed 25th April 7.30-9.30pm |
| Pub Quiz Maidenhead | TBA |

A GRAND DAY OUT

New Year retail therapy is on offer at the Chute Pavilion, Sherborne St John, near Basingstoke, on January 26th, from 10am - 4pm. and Sherborne St John Village Hall. The £3 entrance fee includes coffee. Other refreshments are available as well as facilities for disabled people.

The Grand Charity Sale featuring a wide assortment of gifts is being held in aid of the MNDA

Contact Details

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