**WELLSPRING WEST SUSSEX**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020**

This year (2019-20), Wellspring West Sussex has continued providing information to families with disabled and special needs children and young people through our newsletters, website and Facebook page. During 2019 we delivered creative arts workshops to children and young people with special needs and their siblings. The first part of 2020 was challenging as we adapted to the Coronavirus and thought of different ways we could support families.

In 2019 we published two editions of the newsletter. Issue 1, Creative Adventures included details of Adam Gellibrand’s music workshops and Chris North’s poetry sessions in local libraries as well as a short update on the first Wheely Wonders days of the year. We featured wheelchair fencer Jonathan Collins who had recently had his book published and Kangaroos who were celebrating 25 years of working with children with additional needs. My article was about the recent holiday I had been on with Limitless Travel to Holland.

Issue 2 was titled “You Can Do It!” and included positive stories of achievement such as Peter Langton’s experiences in his first year at university and students from Angmering College participating in the National Junior Games. I wrote about receiving my Honorary Masters degree and we also included another update on all our Creative Arts workshops.

Issue 1 was funded by various sources including the National Lottery Community Fund, this grant was sourced with help from Fit, Well and Connected, and Issue 2 was funded by the Friarsgate Trust, with both editions containing a paid advertisement from Southern Mobility Vehicles.

Our website and Facebook page have been kept up to date with events happening across the county and relevant national information. The website receives on average 80-90 visits per month and our Facebook page now has 150 people who “Like” it and are regularly updated with events and news shared. Followers of the Facebook page can also Share details with us and this can then be put into our newsletters. We put each newsletter on the website when it is published and send an email to our online mailing list of 71 contacts. At the start of Lockdown I created a new “Coronavirus Updates” section on our website with categorised sections with interesting and helpful information and ideas for families and those working with them. I also added a section titled “Lizzie’s Applefield Updates” where I shared photos and films of spring and summer on my smallholding. These were especially enjoyed by families who were missing our Wheely Wonders days.

Children with special needs and their siblings have continued to be able to attend my Craft Club with funding from the Thornton Trust. A 9 year old boy with visual impairment attended the Flower themed club in May 2019 and he also came for the Seaside Craft Club in June and July 2019 along with a 5 year old boy with severe anxiety and selective mutism. The Christmas Craft Club (2019) was very popular with families who booked in through my notification shared on the Chichester Down’s Syndrome Support Group Facebook page. One boy aged 10 came back for the first time since he was 6 so it was a lovely reunion. His 7 year old friend also came with his 6 year old sister and a 10 year old sister from another family also attended. The Spring 2020 Craft Club was cut short by Lockdown but the boy with severe anxiety and selective mutism returned for the two sessions and it was wonderful to see how he had grown in confidence over the year; this time his parents left him and he was able to ask for what he needed independently.

All the children enjoyed the sessions and made new friends within the groups. They were all really proud of everything they created and the parents were so pleased to be shown their children’s work. I have continued having young people volunteering to help, some as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award and it is lovely to see how well they communicate with all the children.

Our first “Wheely Wonders” family days of 2019 were in April; the first was an Easter themed day attended by 8 children and one young person with special needs and 4 siblings. This day was funded by the Shanly Foundation. For the second day we welcomed 5 children and their 5 siblings and one young person. Chris North also joined us and families all enjoyed his magic show at the end of the afternoon. In May we ran a day for 9 children and 6 staff from PACSO who paid for the Forest School morning themselves with the Craft Club funded by Wellspring. The children loved meeting all the farm animals and it was wonderful to see how calm and gentle they were with the bottle fed lambs. In June we had 8 children with 4 siblings and one young person and again they all enjoyed helping to feed the lambs and hold the fluffy goslings! In July we ran two days – the first was attended by 6 children with 4 siblings and 2 young people and the second day (the hottest day of 2019!) was for 4 children with complex needs and 5 staff from Kangaroos who also paid for the morning with the afternoon funded by Wellspring. We held two Halloween themed days in October as we had to cancel our September date due to rain. Over the weekend we had 12 children with special needs, 8 siblings and one young person. Chris North added some spooky magic on the second day. At the beginning of November we held a fireworks themed day and everyone enjoyed toffee apple slices cooked on the campfire as well as sparklers at the end of the afternoon. This date was attended by 5 children and 3 siblings. Our last date of 2019 was at the end of November when we had a “Countdown to Christmas” day with 6 children and their 5 siblings. Towards the end of the afternoon we had a surprise visit from Father Christmas who had presents for all the children in his sack; it was delightful to see the joy on the children’s faces! In 2019 in total we were so happy to have welcomed 64 children and young people at Wheely Wonders. The 2019 dates were funded by The Headley Foundation. We had planned two dates for March but unfortunately due to the weather and then the beginning of Lockdown we had to cancel both events. We published a leaflet (funded by the Pennies Fund from The Entertainer toy shop) about Wheely Wonders to share with more families who we now hope to meet in 2021. The leaflet described what to expect at a Wheely Wonders day, an introduction to the team and some wonderful feedback:

*“We absolutely love the Wheely Wonders days at Applefield farm. I have 2 boys (one is in a wheelchair and one is not) and we find it hard as a family to find activities that they can both equally participate in and both get equal enjoyment out of... Wheely Wonders gives us that opportunity. My husband and I love seeing them doing the fun activities together like making crafts and watching the magic show. I also can’t describe how lovely it is to be surrounded by other families in the same situation as us who understand our struggles and challenges. The team at Wheely Wonders are such lovely people and they make us feel so welcome. We love it!”*

Funding this financial year came from The Headley Foundation (£2920), Pennies a fund run by The Entertainer toy shop (£1000), three donations (£5.00, £20.00 and £10.00) and a paid advertisement page from Southern Mobility Vehicles (£50.00). Through Easyfundraising.com where online shoppers can “earn” donations for Wellspring, we raised £16.83.

In January 2020 we published a Wellspring Information Booklet detailing all the different aspects of our work which we will send with any applications we make for funding in the next year. The Booklet was also funded by the Pennies Fund from The Entertainer toy shop.

In the next year we will be looking for new sources of income to enable us to continue running Creative Arts workshops and Wheely Wonders days as well as supporting us with printing the newsletters and costs of post and packaging. We will be looking for businesses who wish to advertise in the newsletter and on our website and pay the monthly website fee. We will continue to keep our mailing list updated to ensure it is complying with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) laws.

We are extremely grateful to everyone who has supported Wellspring West Sussex in the past year and we are looking forward to restarting more work when it is safe to do so.

Lizzie Baily

Chair – Wellspring West Sussex

October 2020