**WELLSPRING WEST SUSSEX**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023**

This year (2022-23), Wellspring West Sussex has provided information to families with disabled and special needs children and young people through our newsletters, website and Facebook page. We returned to a normal year providing many creative arts workshops for children and young people with special needs and their siblings.

We published two newsletters in 2022 – both were on the theme of Special Schools as we had too much information to fit into one edition! Issue 1 featured articles from River Beach School in Littlehampton which has a Special Support Centre for deaf children and showcased one of their pupils who loves dance. We also had an article from 11 year old Leo, a visually impaired student at the Lavinia Norfolk Centre; an audio version of his article was made available on our website. We had three interviews with students at the University of Chichester about their experiences of working with children with additional needs and my pages were about my own Educational Journey. The newsletter was funded by the Baily Thomas Charitable Trust and the Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust.

Issue 2 had lots of articles focusing on links with Queen Elizabeth II following her death. QEII School in Horsham’s page discussed their connection and how students across the school had celebrated the Platinum Jubilee. Chailey Heritage School sent an article about members of the Royal Family who had visited the school, and my article was about my trip to London to see the Queen’s Lying in State. There was an article on the Teach Us Too campaign and one from Angling4Education. We also included reports on all our Creative Arts Workshops and both newsletters contained paid advertisements from ABA Autism. Issue 2 was funded by a contribution from the grant from Persimmon Homes Community Champions and the Thornton Trust. This year there were also grants from Midhurst Rother College, Sharon Langton and Lizzie Baily and others which helped to fund the newsletters.

Our website and Facebook page have been kept updated with relevant local and national information as well as news about Wheely Wonders days. The website received approximately 450 visits in the year and our Facebook page now has 270 people who “Follow” it and are regularly updated with local and national events and relevant news items. Followers of the Facebook page can contact us through the page and with us and this has been useful for enquiries about Wheely Wonders days. Newsletters are added to the website when they are published and an email is sent to our online mailing list of 71 contacts. We continue to update the Creative Arts pages on the website.

During the year Wellspring has funded places for 11 children with additional needs and their siblings at my Craft Club. Most of these children joined multiple sessions at different groups through the year. It was wonderful to see the children gaining in confidence and making new friends within the group. They were always proud to show their parents what they had created. Places were funded by the Thornton Trust.

Our 2022 Wheely Wonders days took place monthly from April to November. In April we had 13 children and 6 of these were new. In May we welcomed 3 new families with 19 children attending. In June there were 17 children and young people – 8 were newcomers including our youngest ever visitor - 3 month old Rosie! It was wonderful to meet 11 new children (16 in total) in July. June and July’s days were funded by the Baily Thomas Charitable Trust. 15 children attended in August and another 15 in September which included 3 new families. We had a large gathering for the October Halloween themed day with 22 children and young people while we had a small group of 7 for the final November date due to rain and illnesses. We are so grateful to [Persimmon Homes](https://www.facebook.com/Persimmon-Homes-506080826131686/?__cft__%5b0%5d=AZXXT6D-nNvohSelTCVcRy6rMGKyrqMus08o95AiMdEpi0H5WXI95cqhI2SvA-nos6kiKzgJceeB6GZrkjJjvjr9ee_Xe-RAQI1yw9pkJYE5YN_Sw8dfokKSy2XVg4BZgfrCOcP4YIIeR_TgR53EkVAcvMdCrLkf-NS9BrdqBnD4PR4ri_AZc_IRgtw17JKKCPU&__tn__=kK-R) Community Champions for the funding for the autumn Wheely Wonders days. We also received a grant from Localgiving Magic Stars (although we did have to subscribe £180 to them in order to receive this!).

We received some lovely feedback from Phoebe aged 8 who attends Craft Club and Wheely Wonders with her younger sisters. Phoebe wrote: *“Lizzie’s Craft Club is amazing and Wheely Wonders is too!! At Wheely Wonders you get to: toast Marshmallows, have fun in the forest, meet the animals, make brilliant crafts. At Lizzie’s Craft Club you get to make so many different things and use all sorts of materials! They are both absolutely amazing. Being able to go there makes me feel happy! If you look around you will see smiles on everyone’s faces!”*

Grants from the Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust and the Toy Trust funded workshops by Adam Gellibrand at Chestnut Tree House, Time4U, and PACSO. These grants also funded Chris North at Parklands School, Boxgrove School, The Chapel, Graylingwell, and the Novium Museum. In November 2022, we received a free laptop from Computers4Charity which Adam is using at the studios in Horsham.

Towards the end of 2022 we received a grant from the Wellesley Charitable Trust which enabled us to continue with these workshops into the new year.

Funding this financial year came from The Thornton Trust (£400), Persimmon Homes Community Champions (£1000), the Wellesley Charitable Trust (£2555), Magic Stars Localgiving Grant (£500), Easyfundraising (£18.67) and donations from Sharon Langton, Lizzie Baily and Debbie Newson (quiz winnings), total £200.

In the next year we will continue to apply for sources of funding to enable us to continue running all our workshops, as well as supporting newsletter printing (500 copies per edition), website hosting, and costs of post and packaging. We will be looking for businesses who wish to advertise in the newsletter and on our website. Our mailing lists will be kept updated to ensure they are complying with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) laws.

I was so surprised and delighted when I found out at the beginning of December 2022 that I had been awarded an MBE in the New Year’s Honours for Services to Disability Advocacy and Charity in West Sussex. Being recognised in this way and having many messages of support has really encouraged me to continue with everything I do with the support of our enthusiastic and hard-working committee. We are extremely grateful to all who have supported Wellspring West Sussex in the past year especially all volunteers who have helped at Wheely Wonders days.

Lizzie Baily MBE

Chair – Wellspring West Sussex

October 2023