

# Wheely Wonders 2021

It has been absolutely wonderful to welcome 59 children and young people with their parents, carers and grandparents back to Applefield and Wheely Wonders days in 2021! This year we have had 33 new children added to our register as well as the families who have come back on a more regular basis. Since Wheely Wonders started in 2017, we have now met 129 children and young people! Wheely Wonders days from April to July were funded by the **Hedley Foundation** and the **Thornton Trust**.

We started the year with a Wheely Wonders weekend in **April** with 23 children over both days. Everyone was very happy as they got out of their cars; many had felt very isolated during the winter lockdown. On 24th April there were 4 new families with 6 children between them; all these families had boys with autistic spectrum disorders. All the boys made friends during the day and the parents felt relaxed and were pleased to meet other families in the same situation as themselves. One mother commented that she felt a different person by lunchtime and a father said that this was the furthest his home schooled son had been away from him all year (he was playing with other boys). Another new family with 7 year old triplets came on 25th April and the mother commented that it was so good to have a day where the children were not arguing for her attention.



During the mornings, children enjoyed meeting and feeding the farm animals, making memory sticks, playing on the swing and hammock, bug hunting and fire lighting. After lunch everyone created a picture on a paper plate and a scratch art picture to remember their day. Both afternoons ended with a magic show provided by Chris North when all the children could assist with the tricks if they chose to. I was so pleased to have volunteers who are students from the University of Chichester as well as one from Chichester College who attended my Craft Club as a child.



Over two days in **June** we welcomed 31 children; 14 had not attended a Wheely Wonders day before. At the end of the day she had spent with us, one mother of 3 children commented that for the first

time in a long time, she'd had a lovely day as well as all her children enjoying themselves. Some of the families who attended for the first time in April came back and it was wonderful to see the children meet the friends they had made and also feel more confident away from their parents.

Everyone was given the opportunity to make a miniature scarecrow in the morning as well as enjoying all the usual Forest School activities. At Craft Club after lunch there were card people



shapes to personalise as well as wooden people and keyrings to decorate.

Chris North provided another magic show on 2nd June as well as giant bubbles and stomp rockets. The giant bubbles were very popular both days with children and helpers all loving the results! Another highlight of the June days was meeting the Applefield lambs and all the children were given the opportunity to hold and bottle feed one. Two of the staff from the university came along to help as well as two students and Debbie, our Wellspring secretary and treasurer.

In **July**, 9 children came for the day and made bubble wands at Forest School and later were able to test them out during the afternoon when Chris got out his bubble mixture. At Craft Club the children decorated pots with patterned paper,



stickers, feathers and pipe cleaners as well as colouring wooden animal shapes which we turned into magnets for the fridge at home. We all enjoyed watching some of Chris' new tricks especially

the magic colouring book! Another of my former Craft Club members came to help as well as another university student and Carole who is on the Wellspring committee.

We were very happy to find out in July that our application to the **National Lottery Community Fund** had been accepted and we received funding for four more Wheely Wonders days. The first of these was in August attended by 10 children. It



was great to have my niece Arabella and nephew Robert as my special helpers for the day and we enjoyed meeting 4 new children as well.

The children used fabric paints, pens and stampers to create some lovely placemats to use on the table at home.

In **September** it was great to have two university students as volunteers for the day and the 13 children were given a nature treasure hunt to collect 6 items in an egg box. These items were then taken to the woodland where they were turned into dream catchers! At Craft Club after lunch everyone decorated fabric pencil cases, made bead chain keyrings and decorated exercise books for the new term. Arabella and Robert were with me again and enjoyed seeing some of the families they met in August. Oreo (one of my dogs) loved being allowed to come out with us for the day and loved sitting on my footplate to greet everybody on arrival, then had a little ride with Anastasia who had come for the first time!



involved is extremely grateful for her continued support and look forward to welcoming her back any time. At the end of the afternoon we all sat round the fire circle for Chris' magic show and it was so special to see the new children helping with the tricks with such joyous faces.

Gillian said *"It was fantastic to visit the Wheely Wonders. Lizzie does an incredible job organising fun and creative activities for these children. It was great to see the massively positive impact the weekend activity service has on both the children and also their families who support them."*



We had another day of perfect weather on 7th **November** for our final Wheely Wonders of the year. We had 16 children for our bonfire and fireworks themed day.

During the morning everyone had a lovely time with Rosemary the donkey and Jigsaw and Puzzle the goats then the woodland created miniature Guys using sticks and old fabrics with Jen. There was time for marshmallows before lunch and fun with bubbles and games with Chris. At Craft Club I loved chatting to the children as they painted wooden rockets and we did countdowns to launch them into the air! Next, some beautiful fireworks collages were created using sparkly paper, glitter and feathers! We finished the day with some fun with Chris' storytelling boxes as well as percussion instruments and a ukulele brought by one of the teenage volunteers.



We are so looking forward to next year's Wheely Wonders days which we plan to start in the spring; we have

already received funding from the **Baily Thomas Charitable Trust** and the **Ernest Kleinwort Trust!** Please contact me if you would like your family to be added to the mailing list for Wheely Wonders booking pages - places are limited but we have a waiting list so you will get more opportunities if you miss out the first time! If you know anywhere we could apply for more funding for any of our Wellspring projects, please do get in touch with me!

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At the end of September the Wheely Wonders families were all saddened by the news that **Maria Barnes** had passed away at the age of 45. Maria wrote the fantastic article Thoughts on a Very Strange Year in the last edition of Wellspring. The Barnes family; Maria, Terry, Alyx, Tom and Iris have been coming to Wheely Wonders since 2017 and everyone was always uplifted by the joy, laughter and creativity that they brought. At their visit in June this year, Maria and Tom created the whole family in card people shapes and the family all enjoyed cuddling one of the lambs. Maria will be so greatly missed by us all and always remembered for her positivity and wonderful empathy with everyone she talked and listened to.



In **October** half term we held A Wheely Spooky Day with 18 children including Arabella and Robert joining in with lots of Halloween themed activities including no carve pumpkins, conker spiders and trick or treat bags. It was possibly the best weather we'd had the whole year and the day was made extra special as we had



a wonderful visit from Chichester's MP **Gillian Keegan** and her husband Michael. Gillian is also Minister for Care.

We particularly valued the time she spent with everyone involved in the day. It was lovely to be able to show Gillian the positive impact these special days have on the lives of children and young people. Everyone

