

Caring to make a big difference

by Lauren Margrave

NO matter how compassionate and determined a family is, caring for a child with learning, mental or physical disabilities is emotionally exhausting.

The nights of broken sleep and constant need for time and attention takes its toll, not only on the parents, but also on fellow siblings.

When things get too much however, these courageous families can turn to Cherry Trees to provide short-term respite care for their disabled child.

The charity, based in East Clendon, allows families in Surrey the chance to have a break, whether it is just for a few hours or a couple of weeks.

Jan Estaff, fundraising coordinator at Cherry Trees, said: "We will do anything from collecting the child from school and having them stay overnight, to looking after them while the rest of the family go on holiday."

"We like to think of ourselves as a home from home as the children receive a lot of love and attention when they are here and all their needs are catered for."

"We also take the children out to farms, Bird world and the seaside, and the older chil-



A study in concentration as a jigsaw is put together.

dren go shopping or to Starbucks and even go out for dinner to the Harvester, which many of them rarely get to do."

Cherry Trees was established in 1980 when local consultant neuro-paediatrician, Dr Helen Foley, noticed that parents and siblings of children with disabilities needed a break, but more importantly needed to be completely assured that their child would be well looked after. Dr Foley shared her idea with other doctors, social workers and parents and formed a group that established the charity.

Today there are around 110 children from the Surrey who depend on Cherry Trees, who

range in age from nought to 19. They have various disabilities such as autism, Downs syndrome, cerebral palsy and other genetic disorders.

"We are not a nursing home," Jan added, "but the children can continue physiotherapy or special treatments while staying there. The children are cared for by NVQ qualified staff who are able to administer, among other things, gastrostomies."

Cherry Trees has 30 full and part-time paid staff who care for the youngsters and two part-time fundraisers, but the rest of the organisation relies on volunteers, who drive the minibus and raise funds. This



Happiness is a shared moment of enjoyment at Cherry Trees.

year Cherry Trees is planning to expand and modernise its dining room and update the deteriorating kitchen.

Jan said: "Sometimes we can be sitting as many as 30 people at meal times and we just do not have the space, especially considering that some children need to eat in smaller groups."

"The kitchen also needs updating and is smaller than some domestic kitchens. It is well overdue and we were told that we had to remedy the situation by a visiting inspector."

"We have got planning permission and are hoping for construction to begin by April." She added: "We have already raised around £77,500, but the

total cost of the project will be in the region of £240,000.

"While we are hoping to raise some of this money from trusts, the balance will need to be met over and above the amount required."

"The parents give what they can, but most of them come to us with care packages from Surrey County Council."

"We never like to turn people away and so will always try to accommodate children as much as we can, even if their parents cannot pay."

Martin Billel is one of the parents who have leant on Cherry Trees for help and support. He insists that his 17-year-old son Nick, who is on

the autistic spectrum, has benefited no end from the charity.

He said: "Nick's behaviour is very challenging most of the time. He has been attending Cherry Trees for more than 10 years and it has become his second home - almost literally."

"Living with an ASD (autism spectrum disorder) child places restraints on simple family life that often seem unimaginable to observers and makes respite care essential."

"Activities like housework, decorating, gardening and shopping, simply cannot be done when you have to rewind the same video to the same spot 20 times an hour. "When Nick is in respite

care, we can tackle the most mundane and seemingly routine tasks uninterrupted."

Cherry Trees has also provided Martin with time and energy to focus on his other children and even manage to take a holiday for the first time in six years. He added: "Cherry Trees staff and carers consistently go the extra mile to make sure Nick's stay is an enjoyable one and make sure that we as parents do not have to worry about how he is getting on."

"With carefully co-ordinated timings, we were able to take our first holiday for six years last summer. Even his one-to-one carers altered their shift patterns to be there for him for

the whole of his five-day stay, which greatly reduced his anxiety levels. When Nick stays at Cherry Trees it is like a big version of a mainstream kids' sleeper."

"I recall on the Saturday evening of the Rugby World Cup Final, the staff bathed all the children early, got the dressing gowns ready and had some England bunting to decorate the TV room, and sausages and long rolls to make hotdogs."

For more details or to make a donation telephone 01483 222507, visit www.cherrytrees.co.uk or call into the centre in East Clendon.

The Professionals Guildford Marine sets sail for new premises



Advertising Feature



Guildford Marine has moved to Old Woking.

AFTER 15 years in Mayford, Guildford Marine has moved to a much larger premises in Old Woking.

The business was officially opened on January 31 by Tim Law, a renowned sailor in a number of classes and who competed in the Olympics in the finn class and then went on to sail etchells, achieving a number of national and European championship successes.

Guildford Marine, the main chandlery in Surrey, has grown over the years and built up a reputation throughout the southern dinghy sailing clubs, and many others around the country, following its sponsorship of open meeting events and sailors.

The business is run by Chris and Denise and they, being keen sailors, are aware that the customers were not seeing what was really stocked or available in the old shop, so have moved into a building nearly four times the size. The new premises displays

all the ranges, has a well stocked mail order facility aiming to ship out over 90% of the orders within 24 hours and is also now able to carry out boat repairs on site.

The building has been fully modernised and equipped with disabled facilities and can cater for most of the needs of the sailing fraternity.

The clothing section, managed by Denise, caters for everything and everyone from dinghy to ocean yachtsmen and from toddlers upwards. The clothes are displayed so that all the different options are easily seen and most sizes are available. The technical, rigging and chandlery side is overseen by Chris, who does most of the rigging and splicing work personally as he knows how important it is to give a quality finished article.

For a number of years the company has been carrying out repairs for the major insurance companies and now, with the improved facilities, will build on this. "This exciting



Here's to the continued success of Guildford Marine.

move will allow us to offer even better facilities, while retaining our strong tradition of customer service and friendly, knowledgeable advice," said

Chris and Denise. "This is also a business venture linked to a key sporting activity."

The shop is open Tuesday through to Saturday from 9am

to 5.30pm and everyone is welcome to drop in and browse.

The new address is Guildford Marine, 13 Manor Way, Old Woking, Surrey GU22

9JX. For more details, call 01483 756909, e-mail info@guildfordmarine.co.uk or visit the website at www.guildfordmarine.com.

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■ Nutrition. Healthy eating and keeping hydrated will boost energy levels and give us girls glowing hair, skin and nails.

■ Sleep. We all need our beauty sleep and eight hours a day should do the trick. Not only will you wake feeling refreshed and revitalised, but you'll be ready to take on the day ahead.

■ Fresh air. Instead of driving why not walk?

■ Get outside. Feel the wind in your hair, take deep breaths and blow the cobwebs away.

■ Me time. In between work, seeing friends, being a girlfriend, wife, mother, even grandmother, make sure you get some important "me time".

■ Smile. Smiley people appear more confident, light up the room and can even change moods of others. Do something today that makes you smile.

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Luck's Yard Clinic has a team of experienced therapists working together to ensure you can have great feet.

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Luck's Yard Clinic is on the Portsmouth Road at Millford. More details on 01483 527945, or check out the website at www.luckyardclinic.com.