

Mill News



'He has gone from strength to strength at Aspire.'



We couldn't do without Aspire

A parent of an Aspire club member explains what Aspire means to the family.

When Peter started attending Aspire clubs he was a very unhappy primary-school-aged boy with profoundly low self-esteem: school refusing and frequently excluded when he did attend. He self-harmed and every day talked about suicide.

At the initial home visit Ruth (Watts, Aspire coordinator) made before Peter even came to Romsey Mill, it was fantastic for us to see how he could flourish when treated with proper understanding. A boy who was expecting to be 'wrong' or 'bad' was soon offering her a plate of his favourite treats and chatting positively about his interests.

On our first visit to Aspire, he allowed himself to try a new skill (pool), something his experience and expectation of failure made it almost impossible for him to do in other circumstances.

While looking round, he had to leave the building very suddenly and Ruth realised immediately that the smell of the room we had entered had overwhelmed him. This understanding allowed Peter to feel that his response was reasonable, as it was for him, and again feel successful and validated. Otherwise, his sense of failure would have meant he could never have come back.

Cont. overleaf

Romsey Mill is a Christian charity dedicated to creating opportunities for change with young people, children and families in Cambridgeshire—including teenage parents, young people with autism, families with small children, and young people experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage.

Once in a lifetime



This summer has been billed as 'Britain's Biggest Summer'. Major events in the nation's calendar include the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, Euro 2012, Wimbledon, the London 2012 Games and Paralympics.

The Jubilee celebrations and the Olympics Games have been described as 'once in a lifetime' events for our nation. This got me thinking about the fact that the life that we each have is also a one off event.

This being true, the question, "What do I plan to do with my one unique and precious life?" is an important one for us all. I recently came across the following:

I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do or any kindness I can show, to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it for I shall not pass this way again.

These words are generally attributed to a nineteenth-century Quaker called Stephen Grellet. I found them to be both encouraging and challenging. Romsey Mill's work is about doing good and showing kindness – making a lasting difference with others and for others.

I hope you enjoy reading about some of our activities in this edition of Mill News and will, perhaps, be inspired to get more involved with us. I hope, also, that you will enjoy the big summer ahead.

We couldn't do without Aspire

...cont. from front page

I have not encountered Ruth's level of skill anywhere else and it permeates Aspire.

Peter has gone from strength to strength at Aspire and the way he experiences the world is understood and seen as reasonable, valid and the norm. Meeting other young people who share some of his experiences and having the role model of an older teenage volunteer, with Asperger's, is invaluable in helping him to integrate his diagnosis with a positive view of himself. There have been periods when Aspire was the only thing Peter could leave the house for and it was wonderful to know that there he would be accepted and happy when he didn't feel that way anywhere else.

Aspire is invaluable for our whole family. Asperger's syndrome and High Functioning Autism can be hidden disabilities, misunderstood and labelled as 'bad' behaviour. Criteria for success in many

interventions our children experience is for them to act as if they weren't autistic. This leaves many of them believing it is their own fault that they find the world difficult and that if only they try harder, it will be better. It can leave parents feeling our failings are the problem. We constantly shield our children from judgement and disapproval. The

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incidence of mental health problems in our children, their siblings and us is very high.

Aspire is the only place where Peter can relax and be himself and where we do not have to worry about him or about what people will think of us. It provides a massive relief in our stressful lives and helps to ameliorate some of the profound difficulties we face. Our family simply could not do without it.

Lion King a roaring success



Twelve young parents who access our Young Parents Programme groups enjoyed a trip to 'The Lion King' in London, with tickets from a generous donor. The trip was planned as an opportunity for young parents, who rarely get time off, to have an evening out.

Jason, Young Father's Worker at Romsey Mill, said the evening was a great success with everyone enjoying themselves and valuing the time out from caring for children.

As a bonus, the production covered themes

about parenting, loss and maturity that will promote future discussions.

In a letter of thanks to the donor, Ashleigh wrote, 'As a young mum to twin boys, I don't get much time to myself and me and my partner do not spend as much time together as we used to.'

'The evening made us realise there's more to our relationship than being parents.'

'Your kind donation meant that we got to spend time with each other and we are still singing the Lion King songs! The evening brought us closer and made us realise there's more to our relationship than being parents.'

Jason supports fathers to be fully involved in their children's lives. As one young man said, 'If I can achieve one thing with Jason's support, it is to be the best father I can be.'

Arts award achievement



Students from Step-Up, Romsey Mill's alternative education programme, presented their Level 1 Arts Award work at an exhibition at Cambridge Arts Salon in April. The young people, aged 14-16, had painted powerful portraits and landscapes under the tuition of artists Rob Wiseman and Jamie New of Ghettowise. Since the exhibition, all 22 students have achieved their Level 1 award.

The young people invited friends and family along to a private view and were pleased by

the response to their mountain landscapes and portraits of famous figures from the music industry. One parent said, 'This is amazing! I never thought he could do this. It's going up in the lounge.' Another texted to say, 'C has just told me she passed her Arts Award. I'm really proud of her. You do wonderful work. Thank you.'

'This is amazing! I never thought he could do this.'

Romsey Mill offers alternative education routes for young people aged 14-16 who struggle to engage with mainstream schools and may be at risk of permanent exclusion. The courses we provide give these young people the chance to re-engage with learning and to achieve success, often for the first time. We work with local schools to extend this provision to those young people most in need of the small classes and individualised approach we are able to offer.

Music enterprise



Young people in Cambourne and Cambridge have been offered the exciting chance to set up their own company to run a music enterprise, in a project being run by Romsey Mill's Social Inclusion Programme and NE-Xcuse.

NE-Xcuse provides marketing, event and project management services with a focus on the music and entertainment industry. In addition, they are working with community groups to run young enterprise projects, teaching young people how to develop a

product and how to turn their ideas into a successful enterprise.

The project now has twenty committed young people keen to promote their art and sell their products.

In Cambourne, young people aged 16+ want to make a CD of music from their town. They're working with Yvette, from NE-Xcuse and Justin, from Romsey Mill. This is a natural development out of the recently reported 'Soul Studio' in Cambourne.

In Cambridge, a mixed age group is supporting each other in their learning, and not only music and business skills. Jackson Nazombe, SIP Coordinator and co-running the course in Cambridge, says that the young people are learning valuable social and teamwork skills as well as being challenged about their behaviour within their communities. Jacob is a leader in this group. Though struggling with school, he has real talent as an MC and is helping the group by his strong example.

Bacon butties and play

Dads don't always get the chance to experience the joys of toddler groups, or the opportunity to meet other men going through the same parenting experiences as them. So Romsey Children's Centre runs a regular 'Dads' Event', just for them.

At May's Event, twenty-six dads and other male carers brought along their children for a fun-filled morning of creative play, climbing-frames, dens and making crafts together.

Bacon butties for the men and breadsticks for the children are also a must on these occasions.

The event was rounded off with a time of story-telling and singing, led by Children's Centre staff.

The next Dads' Event is on 21st July, 10am-12am at Romsey Mill. To book a place, please contact the Children's Centre on

01223 566102. If you know of any dads, grand-dads or other male carers who might be interested, please let them know.

'Wonderful as they are, children are not designed for a stress free existence.'

(Full-time Father, Richard Hallowes)



First baby massage course



Judith Cork, Young Parents Programme Outreach and Participation Worker, has recently qualified as an Infant Massage Instructor and now the programme is reaping the rewards of her learning, with the first of (we hope) many five-week baby massage courses especially for young parents.

Seven families have signed up for the course, which teaches massage strokes and promises to enhance parent-child bonding,

contentment and sleeping. And by the end of the session all the babies were fast asleep, so it's clearly working.

Judith felt that the initial sessions had been particularly helpful for dads who don't have the same opportunities as mums to be physically close to their babies. She said how moving it had been to see dads bonding with their children in this special way.

Judith is seeing the benefits of baby massage not just in groups but in one-to-one work as well and hopes to see this as a regular part of YPP provision.

Young mums from the Bumps and Babies group took part in a sponsored buggy push to raise money for the Rosie Hospital appeal. They completed a three-mile walk from the market place to Addenbrooke's to raise over £300 for the hospital where many of them had their babies.

Time for moving on

It's that time of year when children and young people are thinking about their next move. At Romsey Mill, we're working to make these transitions successful, whether at Playgroup, or through Transitions or Aspire Programmes.

Playgroup staff help parents prepare their children for starting school and make sure that schools have all the information they need to best support our Playgroup children as they move on.

Transitions staff, Mary and Naomi, enter a very busy time, running thirty-nine transfer groups with small groups of year 6 children in fifteen primary schools across the city.

And in Aspire, Ruth and Avril are supporting twelve young people from Aspire clubs who are moving up to secondary school in September. This is a particularly challenging move for young people with autistic spectrum conditions and Ruth and Avril have based their sessions on Romsey Mill's *Ready to Go*

resource—an excellent package taking young people though their most common concerns such as finding their way around, making friends and coping with workload.

Sam—a case study

Sam is in year 6 and part of a Romsey Mill transfer group. She is worried about starting secondary school, and lacks confidence. When the group began she was very quiet and nervous about joining in with games and activities. As the term has progressed, she has become more confident about joining in, even contributing her own ideas to discussions. She came to the activity day at Romsey Mill during half term and though shy at first, her confidence grew throughout the morning with encouragement from her peers during the team challenges. At the end of the morning, she was a more confident person. Transitions Worker Naomi said, 'It was lovely to see her come out of her shell.'

Urban Roar



A new project is giving 9-11-year-olds in south Cambridge the chance to get outdoors and experience some 'urban adventure'. In partnership with the Children's and Young People's Participation Service (affectionately know as ChYpPs) from Cambridge City Council, we are taking eleven children out for weekly outdoor fun. All the children have been referred to the project, often because of confidence and self-esteem issues.

The project began with a two-day residential in Norfolk, where some of the children went to

a beach for their first time. They all enjoyed the experience of cooking and eating together.

Subsequent sessions have been based at the urban adventure play area in Cherry Hinton Hall Park, where there has been den-building, a scavenger hunt, teamwork and trust games. Activities help the young people to stretch themselves, have a positive approach to challenges and to learn to assess risks.

Each young person has set goals for the ten-week course. One said he wanted to work against the bullying he had seen and experienced. Another said she was aiming to have lots of fun because she didn't go outside much normally.

This course is being run with funding from the South Cambs and City Area Partnership. In September, children in the North area will have a similar opportunity when Romsey Mill teams up with ChYpPs for more urban adventure challenges.

..... Response form.....

Please contribute to Romsey Mill's work:

£15 pays for one hour of a Youth Worker's time to support a young person

£25 pays for a young person to attend one session of accredited learning

£40 pays for a youth worker to run a session of late night football for twenty young people, reducing antisocial behaviour and crime

£150 pays for a young parent to attend a ten-week antenatal course, tailored to their needs

Cheques payable to 'Romsey Mill Trust'.

Gift Aid Declaration

Please treat the enclosed £..... as a Gift Aid donation. I confirm that I have paid or will pay Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year that is at least equal to the amount of tax that may be reclaimed on my charitable gifts for that year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify, and that the charity will reclaim 25p tax on every £1 that I give.

Title First name

Surname

Full home address

.....

Postcode

Email

Signature

Date

Please tell Romsey Mill if you: change your name or address, want to cancel this declaration, no longer pay sufficient tax.

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate please see www.hmrc.gov.uk for further information.

Please cut off this form and return to:

*Romsey Mill, Hemingford Road, FREEPOST
CB1067, Cambridge, CB1 3YD*

News in brief

Staff

Congratulations to James and Rachel Bennett on the birth of Joseph. The new family is doing well and even getting some sleep occasionally.

Welcome to Dawn Bainbridge new Grants and Contracts Fundraiser.

We said goodbye to social work students Hannah (Anglia Ruskin) and Michelle (De Montfort), who have been on placement with us this year. Their work in SIP has been very valuable and we wish them well.

Louise, Kat and Helena, one-to-one support assistants in Playgroup, move on to local schools as teaching assistants.

Funding

Cambridge University Press gave a donation of over £29,000 – some of which

was funded corporately, but the majority raised through the efforts of individuals and departments within the Press. In addition, the Press has contributed employee time and expertise, as well as goods and services in kind – the benefit and impact of which is incalculable. Romsey Mill is delighted that Cambridge University Press has committed to support us for another year as their nominated charity.

The Church Schools Trust gave a generous grant of £25,000 to Transitions and the **British Embassy in Kuwait** sent an unexpected gift of nearly £2,500.

Community events

The Covent Garden Street Party has chosen Romsey Mill again as one of its charities.

Join us to watch the Olympic torch pass by Romsey Mill on 7th July at around 6pm.

Thought for the day

Does not wisdom call out? Wisdom is more precious than rubies and nothing you desire can compare with her. *Proverbs 8*

Waste couture

Nearly three million textile items are dumped in landfill every day in the UK: that's half a million tonnes each year. Eye opening stats like these gave one of Kate Nation's groups of young women extra enthusiasm for recycling fabrics to create renewed and saleable items.

Cambridge-based artist, Beverley Carpenter, approached Kate with the idea of running workshops to create a 'fashion label for waste fabrics'. Beverley suggested using a mobile screen printing set-up to produce textiles to be displayed at Strawberry Fair and Cambridge's Big Weekend. As Kate's young women were already talking about fundraising by making printed items from used fabrics, Beverley's offer couldn't have come at a better time.

During the sessions, the young women created stencils of their own to paint their designs onto t-shirts and other recycled fabric items, before progressing to using the screen

printing facility.

They're delighted with results, looking forward to taking their ideas further and were proud to see them installed at Strawberry Fair.

Beverley Carpenter has international experience in making public art and in social activism. She previously worked with another Romsey Mill young women's group to create a film exploring the idea of 'getting your voice heard', especially on the issue of human trafficking.



[Donate now](#)

Please donate now to support the work of Romsey Mill. You can write a cheque and send it to us, or [donate online via our website.](#)



Fundraising heroes

Individual supporters have raised over £4,000 for Romsey Mill during the last quarter. Inspired? Contact Diane Hicks for ways you could join us in raising funds, on 01223 566492 or [www.romseymill.org/contact-us.](http://www.romseymill.org/contact-us)

Running for Aspire

Rob Payne, former Aspire volunteer said, 'I have seen firsthand the amazing work of Romsey Mill. Because of this, I am happy to have put myself through the weeks of hard training and to face the challenge of running my first (and last) marathon on 22nd April.' Rob raised an amazing £3,639, helping to provide vital social and skills support to young people with autistic spectrum conditions, and their families.

Hair today...

Mike Farrington, Alternative Education Coordinator, wore a 'Cassie' (R&B singer) haircut for one week. Having grown his hair for about two years, Mike decided on a dramatic change of style. Sponsors voted for two styles (the other one was footballer Mario Balotelli's) and the biggest money-raiser won.

Mike has raised smiles and over £300 so far. You can support Mike at www.justgiving.com/mike-farrington

Jubilee cupcakes

Local families took to their kitchens to enter Romsey Mill's Jubilee Cupcake Competition and cake sale raising about £100.

The competition had three age categories and a Jubilee theme. It was judged by local cake expert, Avril Unwin, who also gave a demonstration in cake decoration. Cakes were available to buy and a cupcake champion was crowned in each age group, with prizes kindly donated by Cutlacks.

Calling all jam and cake makers

Two of our long term supporters are kindly hosting a garden party to raise funds for Romsey Mill on Saturday September 22nd. Could you produce cakes, jams or pickles for us to sell at the event? Please contact Diane Hicks, www.romseymill.org/contact-us or tel 01223 566492 if you can help.

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