

# Mill News



## Young mums at the cutting edge

Fratelli Hair is a busy salon on Mill Road, known for its great haircuts and warm welcome. It is owned and managed by brothers, Luigi and Joey Altomonte, who used to come to Romsey Mill when it was a youth club to play pool and, as they say, keep out of trouble! Now successful businessmen, they are committed to putting something back into the community and helping others get a foot on the ladder.

Recently Fratelli have supported two of our young mums, Kerry Mitchell and Anya Trotta, with work experience and employment whilst they train to be professional hairdressers.

Kerry was 19 and Anya was 17 when they first came to Romsey Mill's Young Parents Programme (YPP), and attended antenatal classes to prepare for birth and motherhood.

After having their baby boys, they continued to receive practical and emotional support as they got used to being mums. Bekki Clark, YPP Progressions Worker, helped Kerry and Anya think about their career choices, what qualifications they would need and how to arrange childcare and benefits so they could pursue their goals. Kerry has real flair for 'hair up' styles and would like to have her own business doing hair and beauty for weddings, whilst Anya would like to have her own portfolio of clients or be a session hairstylist on photo shoots.

Joey says that Fratelli have gained from having such motivated young women in the salon, and that they will continue to support them with their careers, and give them opportunities to develop as hairdressers around their commitments as young mums.

**Romsey Mill works with young people, children and families in Cambridgeshire. Providing practical and emotional support, education and activities for families with babies and pre-school children, young parents, teenagers struggling at home, school or in the community, and young people with autism.**

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# Having Our Say

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As I write, it's the final day of campaigning before the election on 7th May. Polls suggest no party will win an outright majority, so it will certainly be an interesting few days!

If previous elections are anything to go by, Romsey Mill will be a busy building tomorrow as we host a polling station. I enjoy seeing people come and go, having participated as voters. It is a right not available to all, so we should be thankful that we are free to have our say without the threat of violence or coercion.

Listening to the writer Rhidian Brook give his 'Thought for the Day' on Radio 4 this morning, I was struck by this comment he made:

"Whilst politics can be a vital means of improving lives it can't make everything better. There are

aspects of life not covered by the party manifestos and nor should they be." He went on to say that "it is the wisdom of democracy that it doesn't try to politicise the whole of society life, even allowing people to defer to other powers". This distinction is one that Jesus made allusion to when he said to the leaders of his day "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

As a charity, Romsey Mill must not support or oppose a political party or candidate. This does not mean that we cannot take an active interest in the political system and process. Indeed we have a responsibility to engage—but we are also aware that whilst politics can improve lives it can't make everything better. Our Christian ethos recognises a higher power and we are thankful for the help, strength and direction that God provides. As we face an uncertain outcome in this general election it is good to know that we can be confident in this.

**Neil Perry, Chief Executive**

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## A New Face

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In April, Neil Thompson joined Romsey Mill as our Fundraising and Communications Manager.

He is working alongside Charity Green (Fundraiser – People & Partnerships) to

promote what Romsey Mill does for children, families and young people to new and existing supporters who help fund our activities.

Neil is not totally new to Romsey Mill, as he has been a volunteer with us for several years, assisting our work with young people in Cambourne. Neil said: "Having witnessed at close hand some aspects of what Romsey Mill does so well, in building relationships with young people and responding to local needs, I am delighted that I am now able to contribute to that work every day and in a professional capacity."

Prior to joining Romsey Mill, Neil has worked with local fire and rescue services, managing their communications and public relations.

Although the essential nature of the work carried out by the two organisations is different, Neil has identified some similarities between Romsey Mill and his previous emergency service employers.

He said "Like the fire and rescue service, Romsey Mill is highly valued within the community for its excellent work in helping other people; and the employees of both organisations are totally committed to the work that they do, and go about that work in a selfless and professional way. Camaraderie, team work and a sense of humour are also essential—plus lots of tea and cake!"

To contact Neil, call 01223 566492 or email [neil.thompson@romseymill.org](mailto:neil.thompson@romseymill.org)

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# Aspire Anniversary

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Last month we celebrated World Autism Awareness Day with particular enthusiasm, as it is ten years since Romsey Mill developed Aspire – a programme of groups, activities and one-to-one support for young people with high functioning autistic spectrum conditions.

Since 2005, Aspire has worked with over 150 remarkable young people (and their families), and we've been inspired by their courage, perseverance and the way they overcome the daily challenges they face. To mark the occasion, we held an 'autism friendly' disco with delicious home-baked snacks, a raffle, games and competitions – including limbo dancing! Opportunities to socialise and hang out, in an environment where they feel safe and supported, are vital for a young person's confidence and self esteem, as they can often feel isolated and judged at school or in the wider community.

In recent years, as Aspire has grown, we've been particularly impressed with the way families have created their own informal networks of friendship and support – keeping in touch via Facebook or meeting up to share the joys and challenges of having a member of the family with an ASC.

We are also encouraged by the way the families fundraise for Aspire, as they know not

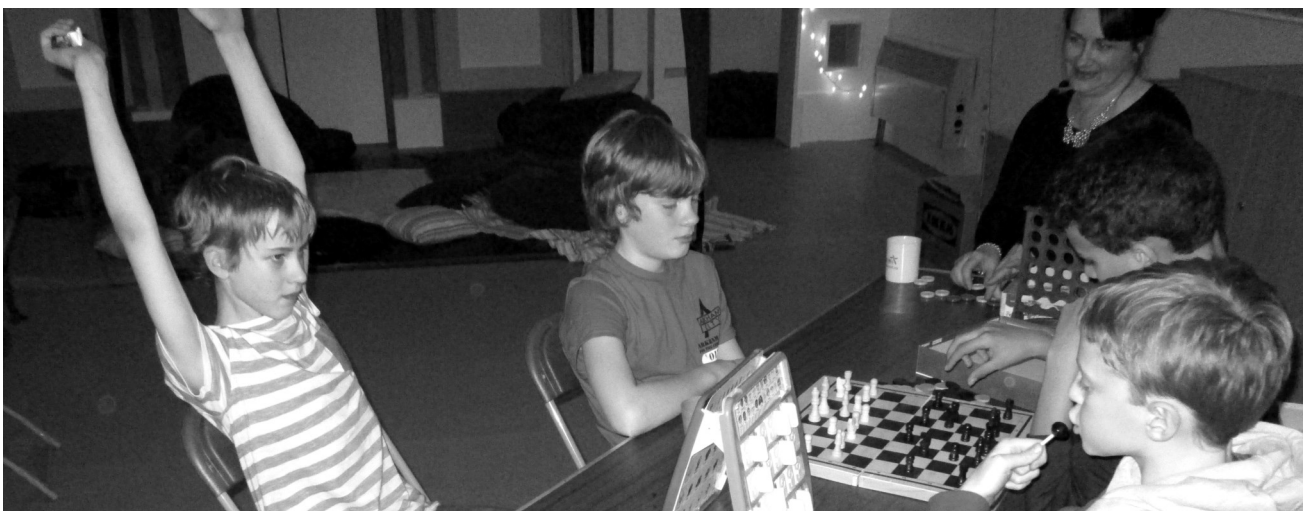
every child or young person with an ASC gets to access the programme. One mum, DeAnna Benjafield, is running from London to Brighton on 23/24 May 2015. She is doing this as her daughter Leah attends an Aspire girls' group - DeAnna explains:

"Romsey Mill has given Leah a place where she can go and be understood. She doesn't have to explain "why" they just know. She feels comfortable to be herself! She looks forward to going every week and can't wait to get home from school on a Wednesday so she can start getting ready. No matter what happens at school she knows she's only a few days or hours away from being with her new friends. She told me that the group "is where everything amazing happens! all my dreams in one place!" It's given her a place where she can be herself, no questions asked."

We work with 80 young people and hold 9 groups every week, but demand is growing. If you'd like to support Aspire and help us to work with as many young people as we can, either as a volunteer or by giving us a donation, please contact Charity Green on 01223 566492.

Or you can sponsor DeAnna via:

**<https://www.justgiving.com/DeAnna-Benjafield1/>**



## Soul Food

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. The Bible, Proverbs 3:5

## News in brief

Welcome to new staff members Aida Ruiz, Marion Bellier, Lorraine Pearce, Rebecca Andrews and Ollie Leonard. Congratulations to Fran Crouch and Lucy Foley, who are moving to new positions in Playgroup. Diane Hicks, who some of you may remember from her previous roles at Romsey Mill, is now Operations and Resources Manager. Welcome back Diane!

Rachel and James Bennett (the Mill's Children's Centre Manager and Programme Manager) are delighted to announce the safe arrival of Oliver Bennett, little brother to Joseph.

Thanks to everyone who cut out Cambridge Building Society's Cash for the Community tokens from the Cambridge News—we received a cheque for £824 for resources for our Young Parents Programme.

Maire Jagger (one of our Children's Centre volunteers) has gained a certificate from the Brazelton Centre, an organisation that promotes understanding of infant behaviour. Maire is now able to carry out observations on new born babies, helping parents respond to their baby's needs more confidently, strengthening bonds in those early weeks. Congratulations Maire!

Thank you to Ridgeons for supplying paint and HP Autonomy for providing volunteers—the spring-cleaned and redecorated Playgroup (Hemingford Road), now looks much lighter and brighter!

It was a pleasure to give local families and young people Easter eggs donated by Kings Gate Church, John Lewis and Virgin Money. Delicious!

## How can you help?

I am sending a one-off donation

I would like to give a regular donation

£10  £30  £50  £150

Other £.....

Name and address .....

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Please tick to Gift Aid your donation

*I confirm that I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each year (6th April to 5th April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand that the charity will reclaim 25p tax on every £1 that I give. I will advise Romsey Mill Trust if these details change.*

Cheques payable to 'Romsey Mill Trust'

Signed: .....

*Please detach this form and return with your donation to the address below.*

### ALTERNATIVELY:

Fundraise for us or donate online at [www.justgiving.com/romseymill](http://www.justgiving.com/romseymill)

Text: MILL12£5 or MILL12£10 to 70070 to give £5 or £10

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**EVERY PENNY COUNTS—THANK YOU!**