

1984-2009
NON-STOP
TALKING
FOR 25 YEARS!

Jenny might soon be speaking faster than ever. She's an effervescent 16 year-old with cerebral palsy who uses her portable talking computer for everything – telling her Mum and Dad what to do, yelling at her brother, and doing her schoolwork. "It allows her personality to shine through," said her Mum, "especially when she asks others how they are feeling, if something is ok – or when she has a 'good idea'!"

Jenny came to the ACE Centre for her first assessment five years ago and her communicator, which she controls with two switches, completely opened up her world. Now with 5000 words at her disposal Jenny can say pretty much anything she wants.



Time for a quick chat...

However, she recently needed a replacement aid, so she returned for another assessment to see what was new. "The people at ACE are inspirational" laughs Jenny's Mum, "I thought we were pretty much on top of developments, but they just blow your mind. They just see so much potential and suggest trying things you would never even have dreamt of, or even worse just dismissed. This time Jenny tried an eye-gaze system, and she was just a natural."

Jenny said that she was "feeling very excited, it was very easy and fast." The system can greatly increase the speed and accuracy of her communication and massively improve her independence. Mum is convinced, "getting the right solution is critical, and even the small things can make an enormous difference between success and frustration. Jenny is absolutely right – with the help of the ACE Centre and all our speech and occupational therapists, the future *is* exciting!"

● Now look here...

Can you control a computer just by looking at it? Believe it or not, you can, and we're exploring the potential of this technology to help children with severe disabilities to communicate. There's virtually nowhere in the UK where all this eye-gaze equipment can be found in one place for use in independent assessments, let alone be available for independent trialling, but thanks to the generosity of our supporters we can offer no less than five state of the art eye-gaze devices for evaluation and loan through our assessment service.



● Junior golfers raise a wedge

Young golfers from fourteen Oxfordshire golf clubs teed off this summer to compete for the inaugural ACE Centre Junior Golf Challenge Cup. The competition will raise funds through sponsorship and raise awareness about our work. Chris Allen, whose marvellous work as tournament coordinator has made the competition possible, said: "It's great to see youngsters raising money for children less fortunate than themselves, and I'm sure this will turn into a great annual event for junior golfers in Oxfordshire and surrounding counties."

● Sarah's run for help

Sarah Pierpoint (pictured left) went beyond the call of duty in helping disabled children by taking part in the British 10k run for us. She already works with Ruben Rafalin, one of the children who uses our ChatterBox Club, and she was running to raise funds for this vital project, which brings together children and parents for organised days of fun and friendship. Our other runners included Katy Lysley and Jo Giles who together raised nearly £1,800, smashing their original target of £200!



The ACE Centre is a charity dedicated to transforming the lives of children with complex disabilities who struggle to communicate.



When Damian Mitchell registered as a volunteer with us he had little idea of what he'd let himself in for. Having been made redundant from a sales advertising role, he soon found himself relying on his outgoing personality. He was working at the Centre on the day we assessed Katriona, a girl whose complex physical difficulties made it extremely difficult for her to speak or use a computer. Katriona was tiring and struggling to motivate herself, so Damian volunteered to help out. He takes up the story;

"Before I knew it, the assessment team had clapped an orange wig and pair of ridiculously huge plastic glasses onto my head and I was dancing to Take That in front of a room full of people I'd never met before. But it worked. Katriona's eyes lit up and soon she was turning a CD player on and off with switches that she operated with her head and her elbow."



Hair-raising experience!

Hats (or wigs) off to Damian for stepping into the spotlight to help. Thankfully his regular volunteering work here is less hair-raising but still pretty varied. "I was initially brought in as a research assistant, but I found myself helping out with a bit of everything pretty soon. I've conducted and presented the results from different research projects, put together conference stands and promotional material and I've travelling to golf courses to help out with the ACE Centre's Junior Golf Challenge. ACE have provided a fantastic way for me to keep myself active and put something interesting and unique on my CV. For

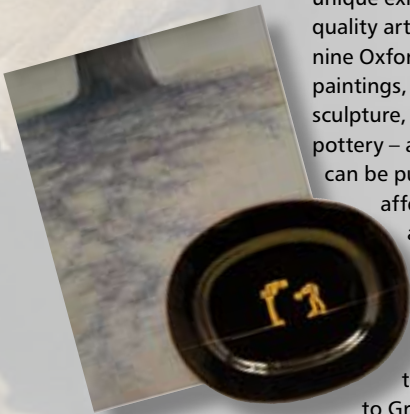
anyone interested in volunteering here, I would highly recommend it!"

If you have time and skills to spare and would like to join our team of volunteers please get in touch. We can't promise you wigs and glasses, but it will be an experience to remember.

Picture this

We're teaming up with Caroline Meynell for an special art event called 'All Together Different'. It's a unique exhibition of top quality art and craft by nine Oxford-linked artists – paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture, jewellery, and pottery – and the exhibits can be purchased at affordable prices in aid of the ACE Centre. If you're in Oxfordshire between 8-11 October, make time for a detour to Great Milton. For more details, take a look at www.carolinemeynell.co.uk

Two of the exhibits at 'All Together Different'



Deb's first to get the credit

Congratulations to Deb Pugh (right), the first delegate from our four new accredited training courses to receive a postgraduate certificate. These popular but intensive four-day courses help professionals to keep in touch with communication technology and techniques, and Deb is the first to receive her certificate from Manchester Metropolitan University. "It was a really interesting, well organised course with excellent resources", said Deb.



New mission, vision and values: The BIG small print

As the first step in securing and expanding our work over the next few years, we've produced a new mission statement that we'd like to share:

Our mission: To provide personalised and independent assessment, research and development, advice and training services for people with severe physical and communication disabilities, and those who support them.

By doing this we enable them to communicate, learn and participate in society.

Our vision: A society where people with complex physical and communication disabilities have a voice to be heard.

Our values: All who are involved or associated with our services will be treated with dignity, confidentiality, professionalism and respect; We will enable full and equal

accessibility to all our services; We will treat users of our services, including their carers and families, with full confidentiality at all times; We will put our service users at the centre of everything we do; We will be fully accountable for everything we do; We will work to achieve excellence in all we do; We will work innovatively, proactively seeking AT/AAC solutions for our users.

Thank you

ACE Staff members Sue O'Brien, Sara Cotmore, Stephen Druce and Mick Donegan are all moving on to pastures new. They leave with our heartfelt thanks and our very best wishes.

Can you help?

From payroll giving to sponsoring or taking part in one of our exciting challenge events, your donation really can make a difference to the lives of the children that we work with. Contact Lena Curtis (curtis@ace-centre.org.uk), our fundraiser, for details at the address below. She's pictured here with Superman as part of a local radio awareness-raising event.

