

1984-2009
NON-STOP
TALKING
FOR 25 YEARS!



Toy Story

Alison Dos Santos no longer sings Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star to her two-year-old son Tiago. These days, she's more likely to opt for The Wheels on the Bus, his current favourite. It's a minor change, but one that represents a huge leap forward in how this family communicates. Tiago has cerebral palsy. He has difficulty controlling his movements and cannot manipulate objects or speak. He's now using technology, specialist toys and support to help him play and communicate what he wants to do, thanks to Toys2Talk, an inspirational ACE Centre initiative which was set up to loan and advise on specialist toys and communication technology.

"By the time we see children, they've usually had four or more years of being unable to communicate," explains Rachel Moore, an ACE Centre therapist. "For them, life is very tricky, with people always guessing what they want." Rachel is at Tiago's home, looking at him from the middle of a Perspex frame in front of her face which has several simple pictures representing activities or actions spaced around its edges. Tiago used it to express his feelings on Twinkle, Twinkle. "He never chooses it, and I'd been singing it to him every night!" Alison laughs.

Tiago now uses a computer, controlling activities by pushing a button when prompted on screen. This early-age access to technology increases his chances of going to a mainstream school.

"When Tiago's peers are starting to write their names and draw pictures," says Rachel, "his computer will be important. He'll be doing the same - but with technology!"



Controlling a toy with a switch

Look2Talk is a winner!

ACE Centre speech and language therapists Clare Latham and Katharine Buckley (pictured right) have received the Sternberg Award for Clinical Innovation from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists. The award was in recognition of the pioneering work they carried out in developing



Look2Talk, a guide for parents and professionals who need to make and use a communication books for children who communicate using their eyes alone.

Clare and Katharine (pictured above with their awards) have generously donated the £1000 prize towards the production costs of Look2Talk, making it more affordable for families who have a child who can communicate by eye-pointing.

Find out more about Look2Talk (and buy it!) at www.ace-centre.org.uk

It'll be no easy ride

We're looking for intrepid bikers to join our India Biking Challenge in October 2009. That's 1,300km in only ten days, riding from Amritsar to New Delhi through packed Indian cities, rough terrain and stunning countryside. And in the process you'll be raising money for the ACE Centre. No modern bike technology to rely on either - you'll be riding Royal Enfield Bullets! It's certainly no holiday, but this challenge is packed with opportunities to fulfil a whole range of personal ambitions and to build a real sense of team spirit.



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



Help us to give the gift of communication
www.ace-centre.org.uk

There's a look of intense concentration on Beth's face as she inches her electric wheelchair from side to side to line up her throw. The other players watch her, her team mates in expectation and her opponents in trepidation.

She's playing Boccia, a game very similar to bowls, where players propel their balls as close as they can to a white 'jack' ball. The appeal of this very popular international sport is that it's equally suited to those with or without a disability.

A game for all

And that's what makes it such a leveller. Players must be seated, and no two players propel the ball in the same

way - they can be kicked, thrown, rolled or, in the case of players with limited movements, sent down a specially-designed chute. Users with visual disabilities can have the position of the jack indicated to them by an auditory signal such as the ringing of a bell.

Our Boccia session was part of an action-packed Chatterbox Club day - that's one of our twice-yearly events where young communication aid users, their families and their carers can come together for a day of fun, chat, discussion and activities. As one parent remarked, "Our son asks at the end of each one, 'when will the next one be?' Next to his birthday and Christmas they're the most important dates in his year."

Beth's ball whizzes down the chute, angles across the playing surface and ends up inches from the jack. It's a game-winner, and Beth, who's a bit of a Boccia pro, smiles and punches the air. "I just love boccia," she says, "it makes me feel good whenever I play."



Can you help?

Your donation really can make a difference. There are many ways in which you can help, from payroll giving to challenge events. Please contact our fundraiser Lena Curtis (curtis@ace-centre.org.uk) for more details.

£50

pays for a switch to give a disabled child a way of accessing computers, toys and communication aids.

£200

buys a simple speaking aid that enables a child to begin to make independent decisions.

£300

funds a specialist occupational therapist to attend our Chatterbox Children's Club.

£500

pays for the purchase of a box of toys that are specially adapted for a disabled child to use.

£2000

will help fund an assessment and ongoing support to enable a child to begin to communicate.

£5000

buys a communication aid to enable a child to speak, learn and fully interact with the world around them.

● Keep us talking!

Although it's the amazing technology and the fantastic young people that take the headlines here at the ACE Centre, we couldn't function without offering support via our telephone and information services. This year is our 25th anniversary, and we're launching our **Keep Us Talking** campaign that aims to raise £80k to keep this lifeblood flowing. Contact Lena now at curtis@ace-centre.org.uk!

● Ice pie success

ACE staff donned their oven gloves and baked over 150 mince pies which were sold warm with Gluhwein at the turning on of the Witney Christmas lights. Our fundraiser Lena Curtis, her sister Maureen and her son Jack bravely manned the stand to bring plenty of good cheer to the freezing people of Witney in Oxfordshire and raise money and awareness of the ACE Centre at the same time.

● Our new Director



We warmly welcome Dr Ben Jabuni as our new Director. Ben took up post in January 2009 and has extensive experience of management in the National Health Service, Local Authority and Independent Voluntary sectors. He is also clinically trained in occupational therapy, psychology and psychotherapy.

● RoundUp – project news to stir the blood

It's been AEGIS since we dived headlong into an EU project as big as this. The AEGIS project aims to develop general accessibility support for developers, so that accessibility will find its way into computing and mobile devices. Step forward our technologists!

Bubbling away: Thanks to your generosity we're now fully funded for SpeechBubble, an exciting website that will give invaluable information to parents, carers and therapists about communication aids and what makes them tick. We've hoping to launch in September 09.