

# A royal welcome



image@www.christinemoonphotography.org.uk

Six-year-old Tamsin England, who has cerebral palsy and has difficulties with her speech, was finally able to meet a real princess recently when HRH The Princess Royal visited the ACE Centre. Tamsin used a knee-operated switch to speak through her communication aid to greet the Princess Royal and present her with a posy.

She said: "It was good. I'm happy."

Her mother Karen said: "It was fun for Tamsin. The Princess is a very normal lady and she doesn't make you feel intimidated, you almost forget that she is royal."

She added: "This place is completely invaluable, I don't know where we would be without it."

The Princess, who was visiting to celebrate the role that occupational therapy has played in the pioneering work of the Centre over the last 25 years, met staff, young people and local dignitaries.

"When it was set up 25 years ago it was more than a pioneer," she said, "Although there were some technologies they felt were possible, getting from possibility to robust functioning was quite a major step, and ACE has done so much of that. I met one of the young people today who I met ten years ago and is about to go to university. How it has changed these young people's lives is fantastic."

words © Fran Bardsley (Oxford Mail)

## On course for success

How can you get to grips with the technology and techniques involved in assisted communication? We offer



a range of one-day and accredited training courses for therapists, teachers, parents and enablers. All of our trainers have many years of experience, and we can run courses either at the

ACE Centre or at a location convenient to you. Contact our Training Coordinator on 01865 759800.

## A challenging year ahead

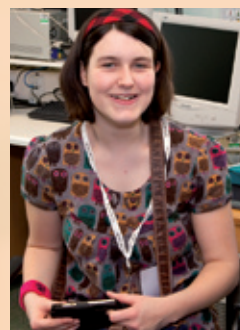
2010 will be a big challenge for us as we need to raise more funds than ever before – £300,000 in fact. Are you a runner, cyclist, walker, or simply looking for a challenge? We have places in a range of events including the British 10k run, London to Paris Cycle Ride, the India Motorbike Challenge, and the ACE Centre Junior Golf Challenge.

If you're not quite so active but would still like to help, perhaps you could organise a cake sale, quiz night, car boot sale or even a themed disco. Chat to our fundraiser, Lena Curtis, on 01865 759804  
[curtis@ace-centre.org.uk](mailto:curtis@ace-centre.org.uk)



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

## ... and hello again!



Fancy meeting you again! When Sophie and Princess Anne first met at the opening of our current building ten years ago, she was a little girl, desperate to communicate despite her disabilities. But now Sophie, who has cerebral palsy, has seen her life change dramatically.

The 17-year-old was able to report she was now studying for her A-Levels and had been offered a place to study history at Worcester University.

Using a specially programmed handheld computer, Sophie, who is a pupil at a mainstream secondary school in Oxford, said, "The Princess was like a normal person, very chatty and loves to laugh. I was telling her my plans for university and she was impressed. The ACE Centre has made a lot of difference to me, and I now have a speech aid that I love."

## ● The IT man

When Stephen Lovejoy was made redundant from an IT company, he wanted to do something worthwhile as a volunteer during his search for a new job. With our own IT resources stretched to breaking point, we welcomed him with open arms. "Some of the tasks that I've undertaken here at ACE have been a real challenge," he says, "providing IT support to keep communications flowing can be an uphill struggle, but thank goodness for the technical advice on the internet. Hopefully my input has made a real difference in helping the staff to provide their services for young people more effectively." And it's not all been hard work. "It was a privilege to have met HRH Princess Anne when she visited the Centre," he adds, "but it's great to have royal recognition that the staff here do an amazing job with the children they help. Transforming their lives and their futures."



Lovejoy: likes Microsoft up to a point

Henry is a remarkable, energetic, and imaginative nine year-old who has autistic spectrum disorder and, although he can speak, he has difficulties in relating to his environment and focusing on a conversation or interaction. He came to the ACE Centre, along with his parents and support staff, to find out if we could help him to use a computer more effectively to improve and support his writing, communication and education.

Henry already knows his way around a computer and navigates with his mouse to his favourite websites. But he struggles to relate to the real world and

## On the write path



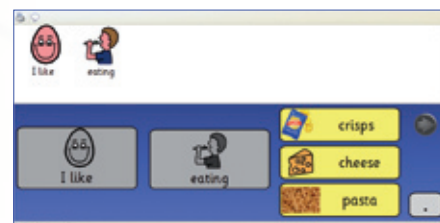
to "use his own words" rather than those of his fantasy worlds.

He's using a computer to learn to write, but he relies heavily on audible cues that are spoken by the computer itself. These important cues are controlled through a right mouse click, an action that Henry finds quite difficult to remember. The solution? Disable the right click on the mouse and transfer it to an *external* switch, well away from the mouse itself.

Henry's wonderful support team produce many stimulating resources to support his daily activities and his understanding of the world. By adding access to a specialist word processor that supports picture communication symbols, Henry

can develop a better grasp on how to communicate through writing (see the screenshot below). By displaying only a relevant selection of words on the screen, Henry is able to focus on them much more clearly.

The progress of all the remarkable children that we see hinges so much on small details like these. They're all part of the hard work done by the parents and professionals who have the passion, dedication and drive to see their children motivated to communicate.



Above: A 'forced-choice' method of constructing sentences can aid comprehension, especially if supported with symbols and spoken prompts.

## ● Payroll donations - an easy way to help us

The payroll donation scheme is invaluable to us. Our 'give as they earn' payroll donors provide us with nearly £11k annually, and these funds are unrestricted, so we can use them for areas of the charity which need it the most. One month that may be new equipment, another month it



may provide enough photocopier paper and toner to allow us to produce information sheets for schools.

With payroll donations, funds are deducted from your pay prior to paying tax and national insurance, providing you with a small tax reduction! If your employer currently operates a payroll scheme and you would like to support us, simply ask your accounts department for

a form. If your employer doesn't operate such a scheme, why not ask them to set one up? It costs nothing but allows staff to support any charity in a simple and easy way.

Alternatively, you could always complete a direct debit mandate and support us weekly, monthly, quarterly or even annually. A direct debit form can be found on the ACE Centre website at <http://bit.ly/acedebit>

## ● Eye award

We've been fortunate to receive a £10k grant from Awards for All for loan library and assessment equipment. It will buy a state of the art eye-gaze communication aid like the one pictured below.

