

## Pounds For Parents

Many families with disabled children are not claiming the benefits and tax credits they are entitled to, and are missing out vital extra income, despite the fact that 55% of disabled children are living in, or at the margins of, poverty.

To help lift these families out of poverty Contact a Family has launched **Pounds for Parents**, a three-year campaign, which will provide the advice and information parents need to claim what's theirs.



"Caring for a disabled child can be exhausting," said Contact a Family's Campaign Manager, Mark Robertson, "and parents often don't have the extra energy to track down information, or make sense of complex forms – even if it's to their advantage."

As a result, many struggle to make ends meet. Families with disabled children tend to have lower incomes - around a quarter below the UK average - and higher expenses than other families - it costs three times more to raise a disabled child. Although benefit payments can be generous, many families do not claim what they are due, because the system is difficult to understand, and forms are unwieldy.

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The campaign will provide a welfare rights specialist, available via our freephone helpline to check families are claiming all the benefits and tax credits they're entitled to; a number of free information leaflets explaining parents' entitlements in plain English and a dedicated worker for Asian families who will ensure minority ethnic communities are getting all the money they should be.

Mark added: "We hope that the campaign will be able to unlock considerable sums of extra money to greatly enhance families' quality of life."

## Helping Families Decode Genetics

Over 80 families from across the North East came together when the Centre for Human Genetics in Newcastle upon Tyne and Contact a Family North East held a large event in July for local families who were unclear about the role of the Genetics Centre.

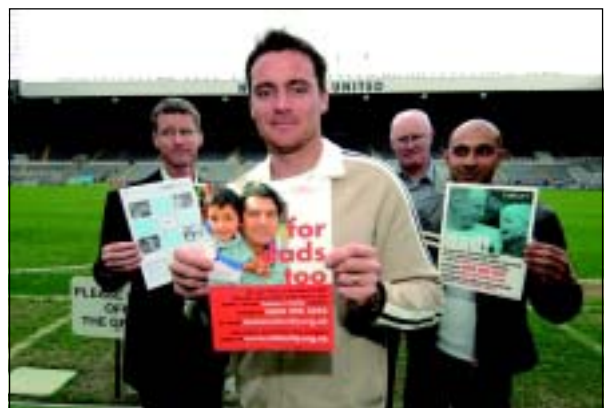
Dr Michael Wright, the Director of the Human Genetics Centre, approached Contact a Family in early 2006 seeking guidance as to how they could approach families to let them know about the work of the Centre and how parents might access the centre. It was agreed that a joint conference and children's event on the same day would be perfect and planning commenced which took up most of the spring time.

***"Thanks for running this on a Sunday and for including Dads." A father at the event***

The Life Science Centre next door to the conference venue gave families free entry while one parent joined the conference to take part in workshops and information sharing. Workshops on topics such as *Finding a Diagnosis*, *Living without a Diagnosis*, *Information Gathering* and *Harnessing Parent Power* were all very well received.

The morning closed with a buffet lunch followed by more entertainment with the dinosaurs in the Life Centre.

"Thank goodness we can access this information," said one parent attendee. "We had been at our wits end."



Above: Newcastle goalkeeper, Steve Harper, helps some fathers from the North East to spread the word about Contact a Family's work to support fathers of disabled children.

# Supporters' Update

## A Marathon Effort

A huge thank you to all our runners who took part in the 2006 London Marathon in April, we really appreciate your support and dedication! This year's race was a huge success with Contact a Family fielding its largest ever team of 16 runners.

Policy Officer Una Summerson (pictured) was the only Contact a Family staff member to complete the gruelling course.

Unfortunately, Finance Officer Jairzeno Parris had to pull out at mile 13 when he suffered a stress fracture and Paul Soames, Director of UK Operations, dropped out during training due to injury.



"It was a wonderful experience," said Una afterwards. "I loved every second. I took it really easy first half enjoying the amazing atmosphere, spotting my supporters and eating jelly babies!"

"I know it sounds strange but crossing the finish line made me feel a bit sad because I really didn't want it to end. The only thing that could have made the day better was if Jairzeno

and Paul were enjoying this feeling too but I know they will be there next year stronger, faster and fitter."

As in previous years, the team were treated to a carbohydrate fuelled meal at the Contact a Family Pasta Party the night before in preparation for the following day's exertions.

The Contact a Family team have collectively raised an amazing £25,000 which will be used to continue our work providing advice and support to families caring for disabled children across the UK.

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***"What a day! It was fantastic. Thanks again for letting me run for you, it was one of the best days of my life. I am so glad that I ran it for such a fantastic charity. Thank you for your continued support throughout."*** Team member, June Cordwell

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If you want to take part in 2007's Marathon, we're already looking for people to join the Contact a Family team. We'll be with you every step of the way with advice and support to help you with your training and fundraising.

For more information, contact Gemma Turner on 020 7608 8733.

This year's **SHERBORNE CASTLE COUNTRY FAIR** took place on May 29th, raising a bumper amount for Contact a Family. The fair previously supported The Lady Hoare Trust and local charities. This year, like last, part of the proceeds from the day will be donated to Contact a Family. Once again, free tickets provided by the organisers meant we were able to invite along some disabled children and their families for a great day out.

## Scaling New Heights For Contact a Family

For some, camping metres up on the roof of a theatre would be enough - but not for David Parker.

David went one further and completed a once in a lifetime challenge, trekking the 'Avenue of Volcanoes' in the Andes of Ecuador. The expedition involved trekking at high altitude across four volcanoes, culminating in the world's highest active volcano, Mount Cotopaxi.



*A frosty David at the summit of Mt Cotopaxi*

"It does have to rate as one of the hardest things that I have attempted," said David.

The tough climb to Mt. Cotopaxi's summit, 5,897m up, was optional, much of it across glacier. "Out of the 15 people that went on the trip I was the only one who made it to the top - nothing to do with fitness or strength - it was pure stubbornness!"

David's six-year old daughter, Abigail, has cerebral palsy. He said: "Contact a Family have been amazing. They offered us valuable advice and put us in touch with other families. They have always been there whenever we've needed advice or support."



David, Production Manager with the Royal Shakespeare Company, paid for the cost of the trip himself but raised £2,400 for Contact a Family by camping out on the theatre's roof for five nights back in November.

**If David's inspired you, take look at the extended list of adventure challenges we now offer which you can undertake for Contact a Family.**

**[www.cafamily.org.uk/adventures](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/adventures)**

Congratulations to **JESS SWEETMAN** and **PAUL CANN**, who both took part in the **British 10K London** road race on one of the hottest days of the year in July, raising money for Contact a Family.

Good luck to all the ladies taking part in the **Hydro Active Women's Challenge** on 3rd September. This year Contact a Family is fielding its largest team of 21 runners who will be completing the 5k run round London's Hyde Park.

## Chief Executive Awarded OBE

Contact a Family Chief Executive Francine Bates has been awarded an OBE in this year's birthday honours list in recognition of her ceaseless campaigning on behalf of families with disabled children.

Commenting on the honour, Contact a Family Chair of Trustees, Mike Lancaster, said, "On my own behalf, on behalf of the staff and other trustees, but most of all, on behalf of all the families Contact a Family has helped over the years, I'd like to offer Francine our sincere congratulations, and thank her for all her hard work – which has so often been above and beyond the call of duty.

"There's no doubt that Francine's OBE is richly deserved. Since taking the helm in June 2000, she has driven through a complete modernisation of Contact a Family's services resulting in a tripling of enquiries from parents, has pushed the needs of disabled children right up the political agenda, and has achieved significant policy changes. Added to that, Francine has worked tirelessly in a number of voluntary roles to improve health services for all."



Francine's key achievements at Contact a Family include:

- Greatly extending services for families with disabled children with a national freephone helpline, enhanced face to face services across the UK and targeted help for black and minority ethnic communities.
- Working to secure a cross-government review of services for disabled children and their families which will feed into the next spending review.
- Making a significant contribution to the National Service Framework for Children, a powerful policy document, which outlines the minimum standards families with disabled children should expect across the country.

In addition, Francine is also Chair of the Council for Disabled Children, Chair of Governors at Jack Tizard Special School and is a member of the NHS Modernisation Board. Before joining Contact a Family, Francine was Deputy Chief Executive at Carers UK, where she was instrumental in bringing about the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000.

## A Chance For Change

Contact a Family was delighted when Chancellor Gordon Brown announced there would be a cross-cutting review of services for disabled children and their families in the recent budget. For too long disabled children and their families have struggled to get the support and services they need. Families want services that will help them live ordinary lives. At long last there is now a chance to put that right.

The findings from the review will help the Government to develop its public spending plans for 2008-2011.

***"Parents who love and care for disabled children know the pleasures and problems of their situations and it is essential that we as MPs learn directly from their experiences to further improve support and advice available to them."*** Joan Humble MP, Hearing Vice-Chair

A panel of MPs from all political parties will gather evidence over the summer through a series of 'hearings' and put forward practical recommendations to the review in the autumn. The panel will hear the views of parliamentarians, ministers and, most importantly, parents and young disabled people, about the biggest challenges facing families today and what needs to change in order to make a difference.

The hearings are being organised by Contact a Family together with the Special Education Consortium, the Council for Disabled Children and Mencap.

## Top Comedians Line Up for Charity

The line-up for Contact a Family's fourth annual fundraising comedy night has been announced with some of the best in British comedy "standing up" for charity.

Joining comedy legend Arthur Smith, who will once again comper the evening, will be comedian Brian Higgins, whose son has a rare syndrome, Ninia Benjamin, star of Lenny Henry's show and BBC3's '3 Non Blondes' as well as top names Alex Horne, Will Smith, Adam Bloom, Stephen Grant and Greg Davies.



Tickets cost £15 and are available from [www.cafamily.org.uk/events](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/events) or 020 7608 8787.

# Supporters' Update

## From Coast to Coast

Congratulations and a big thank you to Chris Foster-Nabi who completed the 192 mile 'Coast to Coast' walk in May raising £1,000 for Contact a Family. Here, Chris recounts her journey:

*"Awesome, breathtaking, fantastic, wonderful - just a few of the words to describe my journey from St. Bees in Cumbria to Robin Hoods Bay in North Yorkshire. What a challenge. A lot of the time the weather was not on our side - rain, hail gusty winds - but nothing could suppress my excitement and overwhelming willpower. Right from day one I knew I was going to do it.*

*After dipping our boots in the Irish Sea and picking up our pebble, we set off on a wet and windy morning from St. Bees. We didn't mind the weather, it was the beginning of an adventure that would take us through some of the most beautiful mountains and countryside.*

*My little niece, Megan who had died with Microcephaly aged 2 and a half on New Year's Eve 1986 was with me all the way. I could feel her presence every day and knowing this walk was not only my challenge but also to help other children with disabilities, like Megan, kept me going.*



*The mountains of the Lakes gave way to the beautiful rolling hills of the Yorkshire Dales, then on to North York Moors until we came to the 3 mile walk along the cliffs that led us down to our final destination where friends and family were waiting with champagne, hugs and congratulations. We dropped our St. Bees pebble on the beach and once more wet our boots - this time in the North Sea.*

*We had made it - what a great feeling. It was so overwhelming an experience I will never forget. I will cherish these memories for the rest of my life. I would like to say a BIG THANK YOU to all my friends and family who have supported me all the way and to everyone who sponsored me."*

## Why I Give

In 1998 the Lady Hoare Trust received its first donation from Pat and Dennis Goddard, and since then they became regular givers, and friends.

Pat and Dennis were innovative fundraisers, giving money instead of exchanging Christmas cards or birthday gifts with friends and on one memorable occasion when a trip to the infamous Millennium Dome was cancelled instead of moaning and groaning they donated the cost of the day to help disabled children.



Dennis Goddard, with his late wife Pat

Pat, herself disabled, supported many charities helping disabled children and their families and it was extremely sad to learn of her death in 2002. It was no surprise, however, when donations continued to arrive from Dennis - on Pat's Birthday, at Christmas, on their Wedding Anniversary and on the anniversary of Pat's death.

***"I feel I'm still giving my wife a present."***

Dennis was interested in the Lady Hoare Trust's merger with Contact a Family and has continued to give on these special occasions, in the knowledge that many families and their children are helped in Pat's memory. As he says 'I still feel I'm giving my wife a present'.

You also may like to keep a loved one's memory alive, as Dennis does, by making an 'In Memoriam' donation or by asking for donations to be made to Contact a Family as a meaningful alternative to flowers at a funeral. For more information contact on 020 7608 8731.

Congratulations to HELEN MACNEIL, IRENE MCDADE and HELEN SPENCE who all ran the **Britanic Women's 10K** in Glasgow for Contact a Family in May. Together they raised over £200. *"It was a great atmosphere and there were lots of people on the sidelines giving us encouragement as we plodded round."* said Helen MacNeil. *"It was fantastic to finish and we all enjoyed ourselves."*

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