

This has been a sad and disappointing year for us on your committee. The sadness comes from the loss of two dear colleagues, John Fuller who passed away in November last year and Jo Morcombe who passed away in March this year. We will miss them very much, both as friends and as valued colleagues on the Committee. John brought his knowledge of learning disability, his links with Burnside and his humour and Jo brought an insight which helped with our decision-making and of course, she was also closely linked with the Mid-Sussex MENCAP Photo Competition with William over many years. This reduces the number of people on the Committee to four; John our Secretary, Ian our Treasurer, Rosie our main fundraiser (and now organiser along with Chris of the Photo Competition), and me.

This brings me to the disappointing part of the year. For a number of years we have tried to get the message across that we have funds available to help people with a learning disability and their families but requests are few and far between. In the main, where we do make donations, they tend to be to other organisations that help and support people with a learning disability such as Kangaroos, Speak Up, Signposts, Springboard and the new Woodlands Mead School and College. This is fine but we would also like to help enrich the lives of individual people in Mid-Sussex. You can see from other parts of this Annual Report that our reserves stand at over £200,000. When we received the legacy that led to these reserves, we, the Committee set out a plan to use this money up over 10 years, donating approximately £30,000 each year. In the year under review, our reserves have performed well, to the extent that interest this year on our invested reserves has been greater than the donations that we have made. At this rate the legacy will last more than ten years. We really do need people to come to us as well as organisations.

When I first joined Mid-Sussex MENCAP over 25 years ago, committee meetings were held regularly each month. In this last year we have only held five Committee meetings which reflects the reduced amount of work that requires Committee discussion. It is also true that we are able to make decisions and have discussions through e-mails which reduce the need for formal meetings. Much of what we do discuss is about the Mary Wheeler Art Competition, Flag Days and fund-raising, The Photo Competition, our Summer Party, Gateway and donations to other organisations that help people with a learning disability in a more practical way, rather than discussing how we can bring real help to individual people. We have also moved these meetings from evenings to afternoons for the time being, which isn't only due to the increasing average age of Committee members.

So it's almost an identity crisis! Is there still a need for a Mid-Sussex MENCAP local society? Is it that provision for people with a learning disability has improved so much over the decades that there is no longer a need for a local society? The striking cuts made by West Sussex County Council over the last two years must have had an effect on individual people's lives but we have not been asked to help any individual to mitigate the effects of cuts on them. Or is it that people just don't know that we are here? If you read this and have any comments or ideas then please get in touch with a committee member.

We have continued to develop our web site www.midsussexmencap.org.uk and it remains one of our main methods of giving information to people about what is happening around Mid-Sussex and further afield and we continue to enjoy a good working relationship with our MENCAP Officer, James, who has been very active in maintaining links and information between us and National MENCAP.

We continue to run two successful Gateway Clubs through the excellent work that Diane does as our Gateway Leader, supported by her many volunteers. Diane has worked hard on recruiting new volunteers with great success. The Mid-Sussex club is now well settled into the St Andrew's Church Hall in Burgess Hill. All the members seem to like this new venue and it has meant that Diane has been able to expand the choice of activities on Club evenings. Our links with the East Grinstead Gateway Club remain strong thanks to the good work that Diane does in maintaining a positive relationship with the members and committee at that Club.

Last year we held our annual Mary Wheeler Art Competition which was again very successful with over 80 entries of a very high quality. Because we had changed the timing of the prize-giving ceremony, many more prize winners were able to attend. Everyone who came along enjoyed seeing the pride and feelings of achievement that the winners had when receiving their prizes. I must put on record out thanks to Ross Thompson for the hard work that he puts in to judging the entries and to his wife for her continued support.

Last year, we also held our other much awaited annual event, the Photo and Film Competition, now in its 29th year. The prize-giving ceremony at the Martlets in Burgess Hill in June was a great success and again it was good to see the pride on people's faces as they received their prizes. This was the first year that the Competition had been organised by Rosie and Chris and they have done a magnificent job.

In the summer we held what is now our annual Summer Party and Disco. Again it was very successful with music from the Horsham Accordion Band, Gary and Keith Hayman and the day was enjoyed by many people. This will definitely be an annual event for us.

We have continued to raise funds and publicise ourselves with flag days in Hassocks and Haywards Heath and I want to thank all who helped us in these flag days by giving up an hour or so to 'shake a tin'.

Finally, I would like to thank all those people who help us on a voluntary and paid basis to make Mid-Sussex MENCAP a success. This includes all my colleagues on the committee as well as Diane and the volunteers at Burgess Hill and East Grinstead Gateway clubs. There is no doubt that these clubs play a major role in bringing social and fun activities to many people with learning disabilities and provide a useful period of respite for their carers. I would also like to thank all those who help with our fund-raising activities, whether through giving up an hour or so on flag days, making cakes, or donating items for Tombolas and the like. I hope that I haven't missed anyone out – Mid-Sussex MENCAP's continued success depends on a joint effort.

Peter Evans

Chairman, Mid-Sussex MENCAP

April 2013

FUTURE PLANS

Our plans for 2013/2014 are to:

1. Continue to examine and review our Policies to ensure that they remain relevant and conform to legal and insurance requirements and to add to our Policies where necessary
2. Generate, and meet, more requests for financial help from our membership, individuals with a learning disability and other people and organisations associated with people with a learning disability in the Mid-Sussex area
3. Continue to support the Club Leader and volunteers and to develop and expand all Gateway activities in Mid-Sussex and East Grinstead
4. Continue all our efforts at fundraising, both to generate income and to publicise and market our presence in Mid-Sussex and our role in supporting people with a learning disability.
5. Run the Photo and Film Competition and the Mary Wheeler Art Competition
6. Do what we can, where necessary in conjunction with other organisations, to help and support those affected by the cuts in services from West Sussex County Council

Peter Evans

Chairman, Mid-Sussex MENCAP

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